

Exclusive: First screens and info for Metal Gear Solid 2 revealed inside!

Issue #56 • Volume 5 • Issue 8 • July 2000

PSExtreme

THE PLAYER'S UNOFFICIAL MONTHLY GUIDE TO THE PLAYSTATION



NIGHTMARE

CREATURE II

PS2

THE FLOODGATES ARE ABOUT TO BURST!



RAYMAN 2

TIMESPLITTERS

METAL GEAR 2





Capture
runaway cat
with
repairman's
help.



If only the answers to solving
the mysteries of Wild Arms 2
were this easy to find. Instead,
you'll face a monumental
challenge to discover the secrets
that lie within this stunning, yet
mysterious 3-D world. A place
where fate lies in the balance.

Where one courageous,
determined hero must sacrifice
his heart for peace. Can he use
the power of all living life forms
and save Filgaia from the evil
forces of Odessa?

Buy drinks
to learn
gossip.



Kick
computer
to make
it work.



Use new
tools to get
treasure.

Teleport Orb
sets you to island.



Save
before
using
duplicators.

Look
inside
barrels





G R E G
OFF@GWLK.NET

Heading out to E3 is always an "interesting" experience, to say the least. Being the hardcore gamers that we are, we like to start our quest to The Show by hopping in a rental van, heading out to Interstate 5, and driving South to LA. The next six hours are spent speculating, reminiscing, playing our Narnias, Virtual Boys, Gameboys and Neo Geo Pockets, and typically waxing on about this game or that. Of course, there is also the requisite stop at Harrie Ranch (an old ranch house that was turned into an oasis in the middle of California's Central Valley a number of years ago) for a gut-wrenching rotation of beef and having to listen to one Winding or another quote, word-for-word, various movie lines (in character voice, no less), such as: Blazing Saddles, Caddyshack, Stripes, Back to School and Fast Times at Ridgemont High... Thankfully, this only comes once a year.

Some of the big news and announcements at the show included the official release date and pricing for the PlayStation2, the unveiling of Konami's masterpiece in the making, Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty, and some behind-closed-doors showings of a handful of PS2 games on their way (the ones that we can talk about are shown in the issue, such as Eidos/Free Radical's Timespitters and THQ/Volition's Red Faction). You can find out all of the details, plus so much more, inside these pages.

Speaking of this issue, in an effort to get you the information as fresh and as fast as possible, we somehow managed to get back from the event and cram together over 30 pages of coverage and games in three short days — a definite record for us! Wait until you get a gander at some of the amazing PS2 games in the works. In addition, we still have 16 new PS and PS2 games reviewed, a great article on PlayStation collectibles by resident Senior Editor Mark Androvich, first looks at THQ's Evil Dead: Hail to the King, "Infogrames' Duke Nukem: Planet of the Babes and EA's The World is Not Enough, plus all of the other requisite PS announcements (codes, news, mail, etc.) that make ours the PlayStation magazine of choice. As always, thanks for reading and we'll see you next month.

E D I T O R S

G R E G O F F

Greg came back from E3 game-lad and grumpy. The reason for this isn't because of the 72-hour deadline (more than in order to finish this issue, or the fact that he hardly slept the five days he was down in LA. No, it was because he had no way to play some of the PS2 titles he was given at the show.

D A V E W I N D I N G

Since returning from E3, Dave has done nothing but rave about the potential of PS2 in its first year. Because of the show, he hasn't been playing as much as he'd like lately, but has still been able to get in a moment here and there. He also wants to say, "Happy Birthday" to Spencer, Maggie and Dave.

M A R K A N D R O V I C H

Mark was going to brag about the Sacramento Kings' home stand against the evil Lakers, but then he saw Game 5. When Los Angeles puts the white guy in the game is over. When he scores, it's a sign of the end times. He was looking forward to E3 mostly because it means he wasn't at home changing diapers.

G A R Y S T R A S S B E R G

Embarrassed by the fact that he actually enjoyed Rhapsody: A Musical Adventure, Gary's been trying to compensate by staying up late and playing a lot of Quake 3. Worried that he may be losing his macho "edge," the "litter boxer" even threatened to bring his rail gun to E3.

D A R I E N A L L E N

E3 has come and gone. Since Darien didn't go this year, he's been putting in his clearest entire time. You ever feel really sorry for someone who didn't get a chance to experience something incredible? The problem is... if we felt sorry for him we wouldn't love NEARLY as much fun ribbing him about it.

A L E X A N D R E W S

No exotic travel for Alex this month, just a lot of hard work at E3 (yeah, right). When he wasn't cruising for babes, he was speaking a lot of time with the new PS2. It's the most work we've got in with the new PS2. It will be short-lived, however, as he was heard talking to his travel agent about an Annville Festival.

E R I C W I N D I N G

Thanks to an alleged blown AOL Me Sports has decided to change his gamename and become Mr. RPG. Despite Mark Androvich's complete lack of RPG respect, Eric has gone head-first into his new role, and even taught one of those one-handed RPG controllers (have his left hand is free to J).

Perfect Dark (N64),
Talladega Nights (PS2),
Nightmare Creatures
2 (PS), Rayman 2 (PS)

Everquest, Rainbow
6: Ravenet 2, 4 Wheel
Thunder, Pique Spear
WB, Soft, Exoticale 64

Dragon's Lair and Space
Ace as 600, second
Fiddle, too many games
with "son" in the title.

Vagrant Story, Brind
Session, Surf Riders
and Virtual Tennisnet

Baldric, WW Arms II,
Ridge Racer V

Test Drive LeMans, Mary
Kate & Ashley's Mystery
Mail, Cosmic Mokester

Legend of Dragoon (PS),
MLB 2000 (PS), Test
Drive LeMans (PS)



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PUBLISHER DAVID JON WINDING EDITOR-IN-CHIEF GREG OFF PRODUCER TIM LINDQUIST PRODUCTION DAVID SILVIERA
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS MARK ANDROVICH • DAVID CASTILLO • ALEX ANDREWS • GARY STRASSBERG • DARIEN ALLEN
SPORTS EDITOR ERIC WINDING ADVERTISING SALES (909) 370-0400 MARK P. WINDING OPERATIONS MANAGER SUSAN OLSEN-WINDING
NEWSSTAND SALES (909) 370-0400 MICHAEL A. GERARDO ASSOCIATES

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| 221 | IN ASSOCIATION WITH "NOT NO TOOTH GOSY" | | | | | 221 |
| 213-498 | PRESENTS | | | | | CHUMP |
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b)



c)



d) "A great new game for the PlayStation® game console..."

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April 2000



- 23 mission battle arenas.
- 11 ruthless and unique gangs + the Final Boss to compete against in battle.
- Each level is loaded with **secret areas**, hidden **power-ups** and dozens of non-gang opponents like **attack droids** and robotic gun turrets.
- **Head-to-head** 2 player split screen **combat**.
- Dozens of power-ups including **invulnerability**, invisibility, **double damage**, guided missile jammers, nitro boosts...
- An arsenal of **destructive** weaponry including **shield-draining** bombs, energy **mega-bolts**, corrosive gas bombs and mini-thermonuclear **warheads**.

DARKSTONE

DEFEAT THE ULTIMATE EVIL IN THE ULTIMATE QUEST

The world is living under the dark shadow of a nefarious dragon. Villagers are turning to stone. Armies of skeletons, swarms of wasps, and lumbering ogres lurk everywhere. Evil is spreading like a plague. And only you can stop it. Scattered across the kingdom are seven ancient magic crystals that together invoke the power of the Orb. Without it, you have no hope of defeating your fire-breathing nemesis. As a knight, monk, thief or sorcerer you will creep through dungeons and castles, explore wilderness and glades, and encounter traps, curses, and puzzles on your quest to unearth the crystals.



July 2000



- 32 levels of closed environments and huge open spaces - **dungeons**, castles, **caves**, glades and villages.
- More than 200 **enemies** and interactive characters.
- More than 30 types of **weapons** and 32 different **spells**; many with multiple variations.
- **Secret** characters **unique** to the PlayStation.[®]

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SPEC OPS: Stealth Patrol

THE ENEMY IS EXPECTING YOU TOMORROW...YOU'RE ALREADY THERE!



April 2000



- Choose **stealth** or all-out frontal **assault** as you lead your team of Rangers into combat against **ultra-powerful** terrorist units.
- Fight** against time and huge **enemy** forces in global **terrorist hotspots**.
- An **arsenal** to choose from including **night-vision** goggles, **sniper** rifles, machine guns, **tripwire** mines, grenades, shotguns, and more.
- Two player** split-screen battle mode.
- Lead your team with **guns blazing** or silently under the **cover of darkness** across landscapes of thick jungle, barren desert, arctic tundra and dense forest.

MARTIAN GOTHIC

EXPLORE THE DARKSIDE OF THE PLANET.

Year 2018. On Vita 1, a base constructed on the face of Mars, man searches for evidence of bacterial life beneath the frozen surface. During the excavation, a giant sarcophagus opens into a vast and ancient necropolis. Soon after, all communication with Mars ends.

Reason for breakdown of transmission: unknown.

Fate of Vita 1 base: unknown.



May 2000



- Through the complex, layered plot **follow** three investigators sent by Earth Control to **assess** the situation on Vita 1.
- Dozens of **treacherous** subterranean city caverns to **explore**.
- Non-linear** puzzle structures **challenge** you at every turn.
- Strange and **violent creatures** **stalk** you constantly as you **seek answers** to the disappearance of Vita 1's staff and the **mystery** of the ancient Martian **necropolis**.

* Suggested Retail Price=\$9.99.

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on the cover

NIGHTMARE



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EXnews

We heard about the West. We also hear about Piko-browsers and several companies going "under". On top of that, we've been hearing about PlayStation games on the Dreamcast. PlayStation shrinking and carts in the desert.

EXecute

We really like clowns. We're going to go right ahead and make the code section three pages long this issue so that we may deliver you an extra long, hard dose of all the good stuff. Yes, friends, in the tomb.



EXcel

This is a very special section. It is our treasured P22 section, where we cover the PlayStation2. This month, we are proud to announce the coverage of five new games. This includes the review of three new games, along with exclusive previews of two new games. How do you like that, 1-1 double-sticks?

EXpecting

Oh, yes. That was the show of shows. There was so much energy and excitement at the show. It was crazy. We have a whole lot of stuff to show you that we saw there (we're talking about E3). We've got 14 pages packed with screen shots of new games. We've got more than that, too. We also took some pictures. It was purely.



EXclusive

Great, great jobs of getting cheap, cheap sales. We're mentioning with exclusive info that we need to share with someone and it might as well be you. That's a lucky break for you, because we're showing off the new Final game, the Evil Dead game and also the Duke Nukem game. That's barbaric.



EXtreme

When the red comes a-calling, this bad man gets up to answer the door with a big, sharp pole ready to go slice up some lanky old monster. It's real scary. It's Nightmare Creatures. And you might want to put on some rubber gloves before you pick up the controller to play this one. We shi you real, man.

It was incredible.

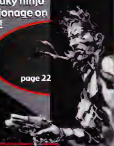


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Index of games:

Sneaky ninja espionage on PS2!

page 22



78

76

74

60

EXcavate

Unearth the whump-do-wooper, loop-de-loop, ol-euper Elcavate section... the whump-do-wooper, loop-de-loop, ol-euper Elcavate section... it's got the zip that makes you fly and that's what really counts. It's the whump-do-wooper, loop-de-loop, ol-euper Elcavate section! Hurry!



EXtra

When you need a little extra bit of reading, you might find that our Extra section is the perfect place to rest your eyeballs. We come through this month with an excellent article about PlayStation collectibles — what you should hang on to for your kids to sell in eBay in 10 or 15 years.



SPorts

Oh, man, we really love sports. There's a huge tidal-wave of sports fury about to be released on all platforms and we can hardly wait. The forces are building up and are about to release themselves with a crazy whirlwind of tumultuous disaster. Until then, check out Arena Football and Fast Drive LeMans.

EXrated

Some "other" review sections read like they've got Crown Disease... they fill you with such a blast, you get all bent over with the grass! and the stomach cramps and the pressure building... and the snail... sweet, pretty religion — the snail! Whew. Thank 3-D! We've got a fresh, pleasant reading review section that reads great, too!

If you were stuck on a plant full of babes...

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Animated Blood
Animated Violence

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PASTY COMPLEXION,
FUNNY ACCENT,
BAD TEETH.

HE'LL FEEL
RIGHT AT HOME
IN LONDON.

Good looks are nice, but they won't help you defeat an evil maniac hell-bent on conquering the world. Lord Palethorne's sinister spell has unleashed a gang of sadistic villains on Victorian London. It's up to Sir Dan to destroy them with his lethal arsenal—Gatling guns, torches, axes, his own removable arm and more. Between mighty battles and baffling puzzles, Sir Dan's facing a deadly challenge. He'll need secrets and some helpful friends—a mad professor, a wily ghost and his Egyptian princess girlfriend—to prevail over an unspeakable horror. After all, a guy can't save the world on bad looks alone.

MEDIEVIL

A GOTHIC JOURNEY TO DIE FOR.



Hot Topic

"Lies, Damn Lies,
and Statistics."

It's one thing to criticize a magazine for objective reasons, such as rapid reviews, erroneous information, or a clear bias towards a certain company or genre. It is another thing to criticize it based upon a "feeling" which, in this case, can be disproved by the facts.

A few months ago I was debating the merits of a video game on the Internet. When the person I was writing to learned that I wrote for PSExtreme, his response was "Those guys give Gold to everything." I looked through the current issue and, sure enough, found that the majority of ratings in that issue were indeed Gold. Looking through the prior issue, I noticed that there were a lot of Gold ratings given in that one too. But did that mean that the magazine editors gave Gold to everything?

Armed with a calculator, a back-issue library, and an anal retentive nature, I set out to prove or disprove this theory. I created a list of all the scores given to every game from November 1995 to May 2000, matching them to the particular editor. Can you believe that we have reviewed 682 different games? I focused on the 12 editors who have reviewed more than 10 games each, although there were also 12 editors who reviewed only a handful of games. I admit that I also had my own preconceived notions of which reviewers were the strictest (Chris Kramer?) or the most generous (Dave Winding?). None of these notions were proved correct when I examined the facts, however.

Not surprisingly, our boss Dave Winding reviewed the most number of games (106) — it's good to be the king! Editor-in-chief Greg was in 6th place, proving that he spends more time creating the magazine than actually playing the games. But don't cry for him! His average rating was the highest, at 89%. What a generous guy! Zach Moston was the lowest, at 79%, but that's because he reviewed a lot of first-generation PC port crap. The rest of us gave average scores in the 82-87% range. Overall, we've given more Silver ratings than Gold and Platinum combined, and we've given more Tin ratings (43 games) than Platinum (42 games). If you read our ratings system, you'll note that a Silver game is "good, but lacking in some area" whereas a Bronze game "suffers from some serious flaws." So it doesn't surprise me that the majority of games have received a Silver rating. That sounds like an average game to me.

And what about claims of bias against EA (alleged by Madden fans, of course, since we prefer GameDay)? 47% of the EA games we reviewed were given Silver, 31% Gold, and 16% Bronze — closely approximating our overall percentages. No bias there!

This illustrates how many people are ruled by erroneous perceptions, rather than the facts, which goes a long way towards explaining some of the Dreamcast vs. PlayStation 2 rhetoric in the next generation console wars (as well as helping to explain Clinton's election). Even when the facts show otherwise, some people will never be convinced.

—Mark Androvich

Dear PSExtreme,

Hi. I'm not going to kiss your magazine's ROYAL butt, but I have 3 questions for you.

- 1) Can you give me E3 tickets? If not, do you know where I can get them?
- 2) Where'd your walk-through section go? You could have at least finished the Legend of Legaia walk-through. I was looking forward to the Syphon Filter or Metal Gear Solid walk-through.
- 3) Do you know if there will ever be a paint ball game out for PlayStation or PS2? If so, when and what price?

Thanks a million,
Alan S.

- 1) We had your E3 tickets waiting for you at the front gate. Where were you?
- 2) We're still looking for someone reliable to do the walk-through section each month. Flakes need not apply.
- 3) Didn't you write us a letter a long, long time ago, asking the same thing about the PS1? No. Paint balls are real-life substitutes for bullets. You don't need substitutes for bullets on a game system when you can have fake, but real looking, bullets instead.

Dear PSExtreme,

Hi Guys. I have a small question. I was wondering, as the PlayStation 2 draws closer and closer, will your magazine be more PS2 oriented? I mean yes eventually PSX will be forgotten and we will all have to move on and start to pay attention only to the new system, but I was just wondering how much PSX coverage will remain once the PSX2 hits the shelves here in the US.

Thanks for your time; Great Magazine, keep up the good work.

Patrick Calderaz

Oh yes. We're making big plans for the magazine. PSExtreme as you know it will only last a couple more issues. Then there will be a new, improved PSExtreme... will it be called PE2, PSE2, ps2ex, PSExtreme2, PSXextreme, PSEx2, USPS2, UC4PS2k or 01812??... only time will tell.

Dear PSExtreme,

Your magazine rocks. Every time I see the new issue, I go running for it. Let's get down to business. I have two questions and a comment.

1. Why did you give WWF Smackdown a score of 97 when it easily deserved a score of 98?

2. This has been in your magazine before, but I still don't understand. Why do you give 999 Sports games better scores than you do EA Sports games? NFL Gameday was far worse than Madden NFL 2000. Now don't get me wrong, Gameday was a great game but Madden was better. And, big deal, you said that you loved NBA Live 2000. Well, I out of tons of EA Sports games isn't a good average. What really got me going was the 73 for Triple Play 2001. What gives? You said that TP 2001 was the worst baseball game. The game, rocks, that sucks on your part.

3. I've noticed that the scores in your magazine have been getting lower. More 80s and 70s. With the PS2 on the horizon, are games beginning to lose their quality? I've seen the same in other magazines as well.

Michael Connors
via the internet

Please read the "Hot Topic" sidebar where Mark Androvich gives the real numbers.

Dear PSEX,

I am experiencing difficulties with a certain game on my PlayStation. When I play FIFA 2000 it keeps freezing up. I can actually start a game until a goal is scored or a break in play occurs. When either of these two things happens the screen turns black and remains like that for a few seconds. Within 10 seconds a loading message appears in the lower right-hand corner. The screen never returns to normal.

Thank you for your help!!!
Jason King

Sounds like an overheating problem or a scratched CD. Try turning your PSX on its side or upside-down while the game is playing. Do you have a mod-chip installed? Is FIFA 2000 the only game this happens to? Look in the back of your manual for EA's customer service number and give them a jingle; perhaps it's a known problem.

Dear PSExtreme,

In Issue 10, Vol. 4, Sept. 99 you mentioned, in the EXware section, the Universal Rocker Controller made by Naki. I would like to purchase one of these controllers in a color blue or purple. I tried the web sites and found only two that sell the controller but in only the clear or crystal clear. Can you please find a site where I can purchase a blue or

preferably purple controller. The game shops in my area don't carry Naki controllers. Only the \$7.99 controllers.

Thanks for your response about the Street Fighter Alpha 3 game. I figured it out. Your mag is the best. Your Platinum rating for the controller must be accurate. I bought games from your reviews and it's just like you reported or close.

Mr. Mazakas

www.nakies.com. Go there or be square (and triangle, and circle, and x...).

Dear PSExtreme,

The other day, I was thinking about how you guys are like big, giant space beastie monsters with sea urchins growing atop your crazy, tilted heads.

Grunty

That's funny. Just last night we were thinking about how you seemed like a big, fat, toad-shaped big toe, growing out of the back of an alien's gnarled neck. Cool, huh?

Dear PSExtreme,

As I sit here in anticipation of being able to buy a real, truly-for-real PS2, I wonder... will the games make me go wee-wee in my shorts like a little baby? Will my teeth rattle from the sheer visual pleasure that my eyeballs are feeding my brain? Or, are they going to be a bunch of big stinky doo-doo piles? You people must know. You have the inside scoop. So tell me, please, please, please. I need to know. I'm dying here.

Elvis Clump
Nowhere, USA

We are sorry to have to be the ones to tell you, but the games are all going to be stinky, poop-poo. No, not really. We just got back from E3 and we saw some stuff there, for the PS2, that made us go wee-wee in our little shorts. It's going to be good. Real good. Get ready.

Dear PSExtreme,

You know, there's really only one thing on our collective minds right now, and that's the impending arrival of the PS2. However, there's still some other questions that need to be answered out there, so please, spend a little time answering other questions too. Okay? Now, what I really need to know from you folks is, how can I get me some free stuff? I want lots of free stuff. T-shirts, hats, pins, shoes, pants, wooden items, paper toys, key chains, etc. How can I get all this stuff? I have a preference that this stuff all have different logos from all my favorite games on it and I want it free, shipped to me, overnight. I want to sell it on eBay for a

profit. I want to get lots of positive feedback from my sales of these items that I got for free. Can it be done? Do you have any experience in this matter, or do you have any of that stuff that you can send me? How about it? I'll enclose a self-addressed, envelope, but I only have this one stamp, so it won't be stamped. Go ahead and stamp it when you write back. Don't forget to put the correct postage on it or the post office won't deliver it and I'll think that you never wrote back to me. Also, I wish the post office would just deliver mail without postage on it. What the heck? What's the difference between thirty-three cents and zero cents? It hardly seems worth the effort of collecting the money from people. I let thirty-three cents fall out of my pocket into the crack in the car seat all the time and I don't even worry about it. Why should they worry about it? They must have billions of dollars already anyway. So anyway, if you could get back to me about that stuff, I'd appreciate it. Also, who can I write to about getting my magazine reviews published? I want to review all the different magazines out there and get paid. Can you help me with that? Please get back to me. Okay. That's about all for now. Thanks for writing back to me so quickly.

Gary from Montana

You, friend Gary, are a nut, and we love you for that. However, there are some things in life that are just best to find out for yourself. Trust us, if you find the answers to your questions yourself, through research and fine diligence, you will feel 102% better about your own self-image and chicks will dig it. Go to it, wrangler!

Dear PSExtreme,

What planet are you guys from??? Angelina Jolie a "flatso"??? Evidently you guys haven't seen Pushing Tin or Gia, but Ms. Jolie (or Mrs. Billy Bob) is anything but flat chested. You need to crawl out from your offices and see what a real woman looks like.

wplh

We were comparing her to our own man-boobs and, baby, she just don't stack up.

Dear PSExtreme,

I've got a real, full-sized, coin operated arcade game called "Two Crude". It's kind of a crappy old beat 'em up game, and I never play it anymore, but it has a real nice monitor and near-perfect controls. I was wondering, can I somehow put my PlayStation into this machine, using its monitor and controls? I think that would be pretty cool.

Bill Walsh
Newark, NJ

Yes, actually, you can do that. It will require a bit of hacking, but if you're a hands-on, nitty gritty kind of guy, the result can be pretty cool. It's becoming a mildly popular thing to do... putting a console or a computer in an arcade cabinet. There's a bunch of web sites on the internet that explain exactly how to do it. arcadecontrols.speedhost.com covers a lot of the general issues involved in a project like that and mameworld.net/pc2gamma has a section specifically on interfacing home consoles to an arcade cabinet.

Dear PSExtreme,

Are you able to get a converter on the PlayStation to make it play DVDs? I saw you could in a magazine advertisement but only for VCDs.

Thanks
BOB I

Nope. You definitely can not. VCDs use normal CD media. DVDs use a totally different format that CD players like the one in the PlayStation can't physically read.

Dear PSExtreme,

First off I would like to say that we love your magazine and we have almost every issue to date. In this letter I would like to talk about Wrestlingmania 2000. Basically we have been playing it like every day since it came out. The game is hot but we have some problems with THQ's gameplay. First off almost all of the moves get swallowed. What I mean by that is if you punch or kick someone and the push grapple, the kick just doesn't come out. Another thing we don't really like is some of the moves we have never seen a wrestler ever do. And another thing is when you do the people's elbow, it doesn't really have to hit the character and it looks beat. Other than that we love the game and we can't wait until THQ comes out with another WWF game.

Phil, Sheldon, Cory
Albany, NY

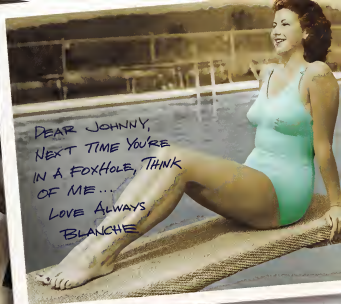
Thanks, buds, for that fine feedback on Wrestlingmania 2000, but that's an N64 game and we're a PlayStation magazine. Doh!

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DFF@psextreme.com



Johnny,
Come liberate
me! Love
Ethel



DEAR JOHNNY,
NEXT TIME YOU'RE
IN A FOXHOLE, THINK
OF ME...
LOVE ALWAYS
BLANCHE



Johnny,
I miss your
plastic fantastic!
Call me...
Love, Agnes



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Edna? How'd you
get this number?
No! I can't talk
right now...we're
about to launch a
major offensive!



WWII-based tactical action with
20 missions covering 6 terrains...



All-new game engine...VFL,
recreates the pain of battle



Intense head-to-head and
cooperative multi-player modes

ARMY MEN WORLD WAR

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3DO
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from around the globe

News Editor: Dave Wierling

BLEEM! AT IT AGAIN

You know, we always thought the idea of business was to produce a good product and, hopefully, make money. One would guess that trying to take on a company as large as Sony wouldn't make much sense. Well, apparently the makers of Bleem! missed that day in business school. Not content to simply have their PlayStation emulator on the market for PC, they have now set their sights on the Dreamcast market. This, of course, strikes much closer to SCEA's home and you can expect that their legal beagles will be spitting fire. Bleem! plans to sell the emulator in four different pieces, each supporting 100 PS games, for \$19.99 each. Any bets on how many of the four will make it to retailer shelves? Try this one on for size: "If you (Retailer X) carry Dreamcast Bleem!, we won't ship you PS2."

THE STREETS OF TOKYO ARE PAVED WITH GOLD

Both Konami and Tecmo recently reported financial earnings for their fiscal years in Japan, both ending in March 2000. Tecmo reported a profit for the year at \$11.9 million dollars, and Konami, on a much larger scale, reported record total profits of \$215 million dollars. Tecmo's success was largely the result of PS2 and Dreamcast sales of "Dead or Alive 2," while Konami scored on its Bemani series of games, including Dance Dance Revolution, Guitar Freaks, Drum Mania and others. While these titles wouldn't raise anybody's blood pressure in the US, they can be found everywhere in the Land of the Rising Sun. With DOA2 set to hit the American PS2 in the fall and MGS2 around the corner in 2001, it looks like the cash register will continue to ring in both companies' favor.

KONAMI'S GOT A WOODY!

In what has to be one of the strangest license acquisitions in recent memory, Konami has secured the rights to Woody Woodpecker and all of his friends (quick, someone under the age of 50 name one Amiga de Woody!) and put them in a kart-style racing game. Someone help us out here — is this ancient cartoon even broadcast on Cartoon Network? We already have Crash, Speed Punks, the Disney game from Crystal with the long name, Motor Toon Grand Prix, Chocobo Racing, and more to come (Star Wars, Looney Tunes, Smurfs, Wacky Racers, et al). What's next, a racing game licensed from the John Hughes movie, "Sixteen Candles" — featuring Long Duc Dong (or, "The Doinger", as he likes to be known). Who knows, maybe the 'Pecker can "rise higher" than its "stiff" competition. But, we get the feeling that more ink is going to "come" the game's way in the form of idiotic, infantile penis jokes... You think?

IT US EXPOSED TO KRYPTONITE?

French publisher Titus is rumored to be having financial troubles in the US. Many of you may remember when Titus bailed Interplay out of its financial woes a few years ago, finally buying the company outright. Well, in spite of a noble effort that saw the originators of "Super Cars" (an old Amiga game) trying to break through with such winners as "Roadsters" and the oft-cursed "Superman," it seems that the bucks are drying up. Does this mean that they won't be acquiring Mindscape and "Rat Attack" or, even more depressing, that the PS2 version of "Boogerman" will never see the light of day?

KURT AND THE GANG ARE COMING TO PS2

In a surprise announcement, Digital Mayhem, the action division of Interplay, along with BioWare Corp., have officially announced the development of MDK Armageddon for the PlayStation2. What's even more surprising is that the title is expected to hit store shelves this winter. Developed by BioWare Corp. (the team responsible for Baldur's Gate), MDK Armageddon promises to expand upon the action, intrigue and humor established by its predecessors, MDK (PC and PS) and MDK 2 (Dreamcast, PC). Players will return to the strange, dark and kooky world inhabited by Kurt Hectie, Max the robotic dog, and the eccentric Dr. Hawkins in a somewhat new, sci-fi action thriller. The game will feature all of the intrigue and humor established by the earlier titles, but Interplay is promising there will be even more — more enemies, more weapons, more items — plus enhanced character models and game levels that will take advantage of the PS2's advanced hardware capabilities (what? You thought they were going to tell you that you would get less?). It'll even incorporate a customizable difficulty setting to satisfy gamers of differing skills and abilities (something sorely lacking in the DC version). The result (according to Interplay) will be a surreal and cinematic romp through ten levels of vast 3D environments and engaging storylines. MDK Armageddon promises superlative graphic detail, stunning visuals and dramatic gameplay. We promise to play it when they give it to us... and to tell you about it.

POKEMON: GOTTA SUE 'EM ALL

Ah, you just have to love lawyers. In part of the continuing de-evolution of the American system of law, a yoke! by the name of Jason Paige is suing, among others, Nintendo of America for \$120 million in damages. Why is he damaged? Apparently, Mr. Paige is the "talent" behind the Pokemon theme song used in the TV show, the movies and (the subject of debate in this case) advertisements. According to David Jaroslawicz, the singer's attorney, Mr. Paige's voice has been used in advertisements, toys, and games without compensation. Yeah, \$120 million — that lame-ass song and voice ain't worth a Jackson. You could have taken a microphone and recorded Eric singing "99 Luftballons" in the shower and been just as successful! In a related story, the guy who recorded the engine sounds for Gran Turismo is suing because he has not received compensation for his art used in the TV spots.

THE INCREDIBLE, SHRINKING PLAYSTATION

While PS2 was certainly the biggest news at the E3 show, Sony was also making noises about a miniaturized future for the PlayStation. Most of you probably haven't noticed, since you already own PlayStations, but it has been impossible to buy a new PlayStation in the US since the beginning of the year. Why? Well, it seems that Sony just does not have the production capacity to manufacture all of the new PS2s AND PlayStations. Well, if rumor becomes truth, Sony is re-tooling the PlayStation and will ship the new version in the US this fall. The new machine is reportedly half the size of the current PS but is NOT a portable machine. If any of you remember the Genesis CD-X, it is probably going to look a lot like that (in terms of weight and dimension). If all goes well, SCEA should be able to get about five million of these slick little gadgets, at \$99, into the retail pipeline by Christmas. In addition, they are considering a 4" color screen and DC adapter to make the new PS a truly portable product—we'll keep you posted.

GT ONE STEP CLOSER TO EXTINCTION

On the endangered list, then thrown a lifeline by Infogrames, GT Interactive's name will cease to exist in the world of video games, effective immediately. Future GT titles, such as "Driver 2," will carry the Infogrames moniker. For the immediate future, GT's stock will continue to trade over NASDAQ, but one has to wonder for how long? Well, they lasted longer than BMG, but another big boy takes a licking, then its heart stops ticking.

TRST

March, 2000

THQ's
WWF Smackdown



1

last month: 1
average retail price: \$40

999 Studios'
Syphon Filter 2



2

last month: 2
average retail price: \$40

LucasArts'
SW: E1 Jedi



3

last month: 11
average retail price: \$41

Activision's
Tony Hawk Pro Skater



4

last month: 4
average retail price: \$40

999 Studios'
Syphon Filter



5

last month: 7
average retail price: \$20

EA's
Triple Play 2001



6

last month: 6
average retail price: \$40

999 Studios'
MLB 2001



7

last month: 5
average retail price: \$41

Sony's
Gran Turismo 2



8

last month: 3
average retail price: \$40

3DO's
Army Men 3D



9

last month: 11
average retail price: \$20

Sony's
Spyro the Dragon



10

last month: 5
average retail price: \$20

** Not in Top 10 Last Month. The ratings reflected above are those of Dimension Publishing and do not represent the opinions of NPD TRS.

from around
the globe

NEWKIDCO: DIGGING HOLES IN NEW MEXICO

You heard it here first, folks: NewKidCo, publisher of a number of pre-school titles on the PlayStation, has entered into a licensing agreement with Universal Studios Consumer Products. The license? ET: The Extra Terrestrial! That's right, the biggest bomb in the history of video games (for you newcomers: Atari 2600, early '80s) is being given new life through the magic of ignorance. Merlin the Magician was once quoted as saying... "Remember this night, for it is the nature of man that they forget." Hello? It is popular legend in the video game industry that there are millions of ET cartridges buried deep in the deserts of New Mexico—along with a number of aliens, a large amount of nuclear waste and lost episodes of "Full House." Why, oh why would somebody try this again? For the three goobers out there who care—ET will be appearing on PlayStation and, horrors, PS2 sometime in the not-distant-enough future. Get out the shovels... it's time to dig deep!

Source: NPD TRS Video Games Tracking Service
900 West Shores Road, Port Washington, NY 11090
(516) 625-2294

top Selling
titles

Street Sk8ter 2

Unlock All Boards

Go to the Main Menu and press **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**.

Ⓢ, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**.

Unlock All Characters:

Go to the Main Menu and press **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**.

Ⓢ, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**.

Full Attributes

Go to the Main Menu and press **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**.

Ⓢ, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**.

Unlock All Courses:

Go to the Main Menu and press **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**.

Ⓢ, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**.

Unlock Movie Option:

Go to the Main Menu and press **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**.

Ⓢ, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**.

Alternate Costume:

Go to the Skater Selection Screen and press

and hold **Ⓢ**, then choose Skate.

Front Mission 3

Access All Mech Parts

Go to the Title Screen and press **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**.

Ⓢ, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**. Select, Start.

Killer Loop

Enter these codes at the Main Menu while holding

START.

H&K 2

Ⓢ, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**.

H&K 4

Ⓢ, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**.

Pulse 2

Ⓢ, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**.

Pulse 3

Ⓢ, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**.

Pulse 4

Ⓢ, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**.

Reac 1

Ⓢ, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**.

Demolition Racer

Unlock Cars, Tracks, and all Modes

Go to the Main Menu and press **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**.

Ⓢ, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**.

Speed Punks

Race as Cosworth

Finish in first place in all the races in the easy tournament. Then, beat Cosworth at Millennium Park.

Easy turbo

Hold the brakes and accelerate at the same time. Then let go of the brake for a turbo start.

Race as Tetsuo

Finish in first place in all the races in the medium tournament. Then, beat Tetsuo at City One.

Race as Beamer

Finish in first place in all the races in the hard Tournament.

Tekken Tag (PS2)

Unlock Tekken Bowl mode

Unlock Ogre to access the Tekken Bowl mode.

Unlock Gallery mode

Unlock Devil to access the Gallery mode.

Unlock Theater mode

Successfully complete the game once to unlock the Theater mode.

Ridge Racer V (PS2)

Control the introduction sequence.

During the introduction sequence, press **Ⓢ** and **Ⓢ** to cycle through three different special effects.

Press **Ⓢ** for black and white graphics. Press **Ⓢ** a second time and the graphics will have a yellow tint. Press **Ⓢ** a third time to add blue effect. Press **Ⓢ** to cycle back through the various effects.

Ridge Racer Type 4

Get All the cars

Pause the game at the halfway point in the first race in Gran Prix mode. Then press, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**.

VANARK (Import)

Invincibility

Press and hold **Ⓢ** + **Ⓢ** + Select + **Ⓢ** at the Start Up Engine screen.

Triple Play 2.001k

EXTRA ANNOUNCER COMMENTS

Additional batter information

Press and hold **Ⓢ** + **Ⓢ** + **Ⓢ** + **Ⓢ** + **Ⓢ** + **Ⓢ** and then press **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**.

Trivia

Press and hold **Ⓢ** + **Ⓢ** + **Ⓢ** + **Ⓢ** + **Ⓢ** and then press **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**.

Weather

Press and hold **Ⓢ** + **Ⓢ** + **Ⓢ** + **Ⓢ** + **Ⓢ** and then press **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**.

Historical commentary

Press and hold **Ⓢ** + **Ⓢ** + **Ⓢ** + **Ⓢ** + **Ⓢ** and then press **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**.

EA Sports Dream team

At the Main Menu select the Single Game Option. Then at the team selection screen, press **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**. If entered correctly you will hear Triple Play Baseball. Alternately, hold **Ⓢ** + **Ⓢ** and press **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ** at the team selection screen to get a team with super attributes.

Space stadium

You have to hit a ground rule double in season mode.

Island stadium

You have to win ten games in a row in season mode.

Unlock Cy Young

Pitch a complete shutout in season mode to unlock Cy Young as a free agent.

Unlock Ernie Banks

Complete six double plays in one game and in season mode to unlock Ernie Banks.

Unlock Frank Robinson

Lead off a game with two home runs in a row, in season mode to unlock Frank Robinson.

Unlock Hank Aaron

Hit four home runs in a row, in season mode to unlock Hank Aaron.

Unlock Babe Ruth as a free Agent

Hit a home run w/any pitcher in season mode.

Unlock Harmon Killebrew

Hit three home runs at over 500 feet in season mode to unlock Harmon Killebrew.

Unlock Jackie Robinson

Steal 2nd and 3rd bases with the same player in one game in season mode to unlock Jackie Robinson.

Unlock Lou Gehrig

Hit a single, a double, a triple, and a home run in one game in season mode to unlock Lou Gehrig.

Unlock Mickey Mantle

Hit a home run over 575 feet in season mode to unlock Mickey Mantle.

Unlock Eddie Murray

Hit a home run from both sides of the plate with a switch hitter in one game and in season mode to unlock Eddie Murray.

Unlock Mike Schmidt

Hit 4 home runs with the same player in one game in season mode to unlock Mike Schmidt.

Unlock Reggie Jackson

Hit one in-the-park home run in season mode to unlock Reggie Jackson.

Unlock Ty Cobb

Steal home in season mode to unlock Ty Cobb.

Unlock Willie Mays

Catch four diving catches in one game in season mode to unlock Willie Mays.

Unlock Willie McCovey

Hit three home runs in a row in season mode to unlock Willie McCovey.

Unlock Satchel Paige

Throw three strike outs in a row, in season mode to unlock Satchel Paige.

Offense power-up

Hit 10 home runs in one game in season mode.

Speed power-up

Steal 2 bases with the same player in season mode.

Invincible players

Hit 2 triples with the same player in one game in season mode.

CPU assist

Win a game by ten or more runs in season mode to unlock the CPU assist.

Power-up Defense

Complete 3 double plays in one game in season mode.

Fast players

Steal all the bases in one game in season mode.

Tall players

Get 6 hits in one game in season mode.

Thin players

Hit a home run with any player that weighs less than 160 pounds.

Large players

Hit a home run with any player that weighs over 250 pounds.

Huge head

Score eight runs in one game in season mode.

Pulsating head

Score twelve runs in one game in season mode.

Tiny head

Get sixteen hits in one game in season mode.

Pencil head

Strike out six times in a row when batting in season mode.

Big head

Score 4 runs in one game in season mode.

Strong arm

Get caught stealing bases more than twice in one game in season mode.

Big bat

Hit two home runs in a row in season mode.

Pulsating bat

Score five runs with the same player in one game in season mode.

ig glove

Complete a diving catch in season mode.

Huge glove

Complete two diving catches in one game in season mode.

Pulsating glove

Complete three diving catches in one game in season mode.

Flaming baseball

Throw twelve strike outs in a row in season mode.

Various Hameron sounds

When your running around the bases after a home run. Press **Ⓢ** to hear a whistle, **Ⓢ** to hear a soft horn, or **Ⓢ** to hear a loud horn.

Big baseball

Steal six strike outs in a row in season mode.

Huge baseball

Throw nine strike outs in a row in season mode.



Publisher: Konami
TACTICAL ESPIONAGE ACTION

METAL GEAR SOLID 2

SONS OF LIBERTY

Without question, the single greatest highlight of the recently concluded E3 expo was Konami's nine minute video teaser for MGS2. Shown to invited media the day before the show began (Greg, Mark, and Gary were our guys on the scene), MGS2 had Greg screaming over his cellular phone and saying things like "Dude, it's the most AMAZING thing you've ever seen!" and "It's real... wait until you see the explosions and the mist." After firing a pathetic 92 at the Riviera Country Club (a choice golfing experience— if you have the means, I highly recommend it), I was not in the mood for hyperbole. My answer to Greg's enthusiasm was something along the lines of: "Yeah, yeah... I'll believe it when I see it."

Well, the very next day was Day One of the show. At 1:00 PM, I was one of the many attendees gathered around Konami's giant projection screen in the middle of their booth. The next nine minutes completely altered my pre-conceived notions of a video game— it is real! The breathtaking detail incorporated into what was already an amazing cinematic experience on the PlayStation was simply overwhelming to behold. Although the game will not ship for over another year, it was THE PS2 launch title.

What I mean by this is that, in all deference to the many outstanding titles that are going to ship for PS2 between now and MGS2, this game will do more for selling the first 2-3 million PS2s than all of the announced launch titles combined. Just the expectation of one day playing this game will be enough to get players to commit their next-generation dollars to Sony.

Hideo Kojima, the director of MGS and MGS2, is asking the question "Can the real truth be narrated in virtual reality?" According to Kojima-san, "MGS2 questions all the 'effects of the digitization of society.' In a world where the military is digitized, everyday life is digitized, and truth and falsehood intertwine, how are we to see through all, and how must we live our lives?" His idea is to "sound the alarm" for what he sees to be the digital society and digital culture, through the lives of Solid Snake and the other characters.

Cool... but I just really, really liked the pretty movies and assumed that the gameplay would be similar to the original title. If this is ALL that Mr. Kojima's team achieves, that will be more than fine with me. We will, obviously, have much more on this expectation-shattering title as we move toward PS2 launch and into next year. Heck, it's enough to make you warm up the PlayStation and get in touch with Meryl one more time.

— Dave —



TIME SPLITTERS

While there were more than a handful of amazing-looking PlayStation2 games on display at this year's E3, only a few truly stood out as potentially ground breaking. Yes, it's true, Metal Gear Solid pretty much stole the show (How could it not? With a brilliant nine minute video running every hour on the hour, on a huge, movie-sized TV wall, it was pretty much the only thing everyone was talking about). But, shown to only a few, privileged members of the gaming press, behind closed doors at Eidos' booth, was a PS2 first-person shooter by the name of Timesplitters. While that in itself might not be a big deal to you, I think you will reconsider when you find out that the developers, Free Radical Design, were part of the team at Rare Design Ltd. responsible for Goldeneye on the N64. Got your attention now?

The storyline behind the game is neither simple nor convoluted and goes a little something like this: In the hundred years spanning the millennium (1935 - 2035), a disparate bunch of heroes and villains battle against their own challenges. Although each is unaware of the others, they all share an ageless common spirit of adventure. But, unknown to them, their daring actions have attracted the attention of the Timesplitters. The Timesplitters, as it turns out, are an evil species of creatures dwelling somewhere outside of time and space. For aeons, they have manipulated the fate of humanity for their own evil gains. With the use of cursed shards of ancient crystal, they have sown fear, greed and conflict throughout time and history. Seeling the unsung heroes as a threat to their wretched existence, these foul creatures have crossed the threshold from their shadowy dimension, ripping the fabric of time itself, in order to confront and eliminate their unwitting opponents.

In the game, you will get the opportunity to step into each and everyone of these heroes' shoes, and do battle against the deadly Timesplitting menace. Each level will represent a new period in time and a different character to control, complete with age-specific weaponry and environments. While the game will offer up a variety of mission-based objectives, there will be a huge focus on fast and furious shooting action found in other first-person titles, such as Quake III and Unreal Tournament.

Of the many features this game will offer, one of the most unique and innovative is the extremely user-friendly level-making editor, which allows would be designers to create complex, multi-storied map environments that would make John Romero wreck his Ferrari in anger. Once a level has been created (which, if you know what you're doing, can take as little as a minute), it can then be quickly tested out by jumping into a game and, if you like what you've made, saved to your memory card just as quickly. In fact, your home grown levels take up such little space that you can literally save hundreds of them on one 8mb card. Some other highlights to touch on include a host of multiplayer game modes: Deathmatch, Capture the Bag, Escort, Last Man Standing, etc. — with up to four players simultaneously, via quad screen, or two player cooperative/competitive modes, a host of hidden characters and bots to unlock in the single player mode (which can be used in the multiplayer games) and an amazing frame rate (60 fps with no slowdown — even in the four player mode).

When all is said and done, Eidos and Free Radical Design are confident they will be able to have the game ready to ship for launch. After seeing it running first-hand at E3, I don't doubt that they will deliver.

Greg

Publisher: Konami

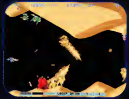
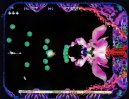
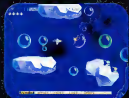
Developer: Konami



After playing Konami's juiced up Gradius at arcades a while back, I thought that any subsequent sequels would follow suit into the world of 3D. When I heard that Konami was releasing Gradius III and IV for the PS2 images of Vik Viper flying through a blazing inferno in full 3D filled my head. I pictured Lord British firing away with the Ripple Laser at some enormous space creature. And why shouldn't I? Gradius' graphics haven't changed much and with that said they are very dated by today's standards, needing a serious overhaul. Wow, have I been let down, visually speaking. Gradius is strictly a 2D affair with only moderate 3D effects. What you probably don't know is that over the last two decades I've played a whole lotta Gradius. I played it when it first appeared in arcades; I played it on the NES and anywhere I could get my hands on it. Does that make me a big fan of the series? I guess so, but more than anything else it makes me a big critic, especially when the latest game in the series has landed smack dab on PS2. Konami's given us a variety of Gradius games from Nemesis to Salamander to even Parodius. I've played them all and I'm still not sick of a series gone stagnant. The main problem with Gradius is that it suffers from being far too much of the same thing. Throw out the snazzy effects and what are we left with? Just another Gradius game with the same weapons and enemies thrown into brand new levels with the same basic premise and a nicely rendered intro. Sure, there's no flicker and little to no slowdown, but it's still Gradius; no more, no less. Gradius III, for that matter, could've easily been done on the SNES (with some slow-down and flicker, of course).

This isn't why I busted out my American Express and spent a grand on PS2. What I did buy a PS2 for is games that are supposed to make the hairs on the back of your neck stand on end. The only time that Gradius will do that to you is when the

person behind the counter mentions the price. To top it off, Gradius is way too difficult for its own good. Oh well, at least Konami's "Up, Up, Down, Down" code still works. The Import PS2 is turning out be



a lemon of sorts. We either get really cool seat-of-your-pants games like Ridge Racer or Tekken or we get the Fantavisions and Driving Emotions of the world. So where does this Gradius package fit into that? Well, I can't say it's really bad, but then again it's not very good. Even true Gradius fans may be disappointed. There's just not enough to differentiate this 128-incarnation from even its 16-bit counterparts. Save your pennies and spend it on Hideo Kojima's upcoming Metal Gear Solid sequel; that'll be worth your money.

bottom line

71%

PS2 imports don't come cheap. Unless you need to own every PS2 game and every shooter in the world or are a huge Gradius fan you may not want to invest in this one. The PS2 has too much to offer to shell out the cash for this one. Just dust off your SNES, blur your vision and pretend it's PS2.

DAVID CASTILLO



Evergrace

Publisher: From

Developer: From

From Software's "Evergrace" is the first "new" experience on the PS2. As such, it is also the game that I have looked forward to the most. Does it live up to my expectations?



No, but it is an entertaining, sometimes wacky adventure game that is graphically solid, if unspectacular.

Evergrace allows you to play the game as both a male and female adventurer. At times during the game, you will be required to switch between them. Both characters play identically and are on the same quest — passing through



primarily the same environments. The game proceeds in a fairly linear fashion, requiring that you trigger some action or event that will allow you to proceed deeper into the game. As you progress, you will encounter friends and enemies that will help you — giving you weapons, armor, information, etc. — or attack you. Kill an enemy and you will usually receive some health potions, etc. The game makes use of save game crystals — one will usually appear in each distinct area of the game you enter. These crystals also double as the armor, weapons and health shop, where you can spend the money that you have earned by defeating enemies.

Much like From's other PS2 title, *Eternal Ring*, Evergrace features many classic RPG trappings, but the game is straight ahead action/adventure. There is a lot of travel back and forth as you seek out whatever item you are missing to allow you to enter the next area. The environments, while colorful and pleasing to the eye, don't really come alive. Everything has an attractive, yet somehow antiseptic, look to it. This may, in part, be due to the fact that Evergrace began its life as a PlayStation game and became a PS2 title during its infancy. It seems logical that the 3D engine for the game would be more structured to the strengths of the older sibling, rather than that of the newborn.



Of course, I don't speak Japanese and am obviously missing the details of the story. But, I can only imagine that, if anything, the game would have become more linear and easier to get through if I knew the native tongue. I get the feeling that much of my back-and-forth time would have been avoided if I just knew what the NPCs were saying.

All in all, Evergrace is a first-generation adventure title that is solid but unspectacular. It stands out in the current PS2 library among the many sequels and well-played titles that graduated to the PS2 from the PlayStation's past. A year from now, we'll look back on it as something akin to "Crime Crackers" or "Mobile Suit Gundam," but, for now, it's the best play outside of RRS and Tekken Tag Tournament.



bottom line

Evergrace is a solid, entertaining game that shows just a little of what the PS2 is all about. While not the most challenging or exciting game, it stands above most of what is currently available for the system.

90%



PlayStation 2

25

page



Sky Surfer

Publisher: Idea Factory

Developer: Toka



One of the downsides of being a gaming fanatic is that you, by the very nature of your own compulsive behavior, are driven to purchase import products. In my case, there was no way in hell that I wasn't going to have a PS2 the day that it came out in Japan and, since then, every piece of software that remotely looked like a game. Of course, this gets you into trouble from time to time, particularly when you are dropping a Benjamin every time you want to play the latest. This brings us to "Sky Surfer"... I mean "Sky Surfer". I pray that the Japanese gamer is more intelligent than the author of this review and that they have stayed away from this quick cash-in turd in droves.



Words fail to describe how truly bad this game is. It was produced by a publisher by the name of Idea Factory. Apparently, their idea was to destroy the thought that PS2 gaming was going to be more technologically advanced than any system that had come before it and to produce the ugliest, most terrible game imaginable — they have succeeded on all counts. Sky Surfer has you free-falling on a snowboard, riding the air currents. As you are falling, the game will direct you, Parappa style, to perform certain button presses that will have you pulling off different moves — think of it as Dragon's Lair where Dirk the Daring has a parachute strapped to his back and is kicked off the tallest castle tower. You are awarded points of these moves as you hurtle toward the ground. If you should be pushed from a vertical position, then you will not be able to execute the

button presses, so you must keep your sky surfer standing tall. As you move closer toward the ground, you have to open your parachute, then hit a specific landing spot. That's the game... Sound like fun?



Well, it gets better, because the game's graphic environment is as empty as the gameplay. Sky Surfer looks like a bad first-generation PlayStation game and to release it on PS2 is absolutely inexcusable — underscored by the fact that no publisher dare show the game as part of their stable at the recently concluded E3 trade show.

Hands down, Sky Surfer is the worst game yet released for PS2 and one of the nastiest of all time. It makes Godzilla Generations look like Zelda.

bottom line

A complete waste of time and one of the most horribly designed and executed games of all time. If this one makes it to the US — in any form, it would be akin to a crime against nature.

01%



FE, FI, FO, FUM,

I smell the blood of an Englishman.
Be he alive or be he dead,
I'll grind his bones to make my bread.



This is a game of revenge. A dark early 1900s revenge where you'll battle against 20 different creatures using new fighting techniques, combination moves, and fatalities. A revenge that goes deep into 30 game sectors in 8 different worlds including subways, castles, sewers, cities (London|Paris), cemeteries, villages, and underwater.

A gory revenge. An extremely gory revenge.

Soundtrack by Rob Zombie.



Sega®/Dreamcast



www.nightmarecreatures.com

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Welcome to our annual E3 Wrap-up. Due to the severe time crunch (we came back from the show on Sunday the 13th with our magazine due at the printer on Wednesday the 17th - d'ohh!), we decided to do things a little bit differently this year. While we have still categorically laid out this section with just about every PlayStation and PlayStation2 game shown at the show (in the usual company-by-company fashion), we had to forgo our typical two-sentence description for each title. A good portion of these games were shown and described in last month's issue, and those that weren't will be covered, a lot more in depth, in the coming months. Think of this section as just a taste and teaser of what is to come.

At the end of this 22-page section, you'll find some of our Editors' personal opinions and experiences from the show, as well as the Top 25 PS and PS2 games each of us are most looking forward to. Bear in mind that they are in no particular order. We're sure you'll agree that there are still plenty of amazing PlayStation games on the way and, even better, a solid showing of drop-dead PS2 titles being readied for launch.

Well, enough banter. Make sure you are comfortably seated with drool cup firmly in place and start turning the pages. All we can say is it's beginning to look a lot like Christmas.

E3 WRAPUP

(NEWS) The primo infos from the show floor.

PS2 LAUNCH INFORMATION

E3 2000 opened with the most anticipated news of all - the official information concerning the U.S. release of the PlayStation 2. Without further ado, here is the skinny: The system has been pushed back from the expected September 9th release date to October 26th. Software developers hoping to have games ready by launch are breathing a sigh of relief. The suggested retail price will be \$299 for the system, a Dual Shock controller, and memory card. Software will be priced at \$49, and extra memory cards, controllers, and a multi-tap will be available for \$34 each.

The most startling revelation was not the price (which was expected) or the later launch date (which was rumored), but a redesign of the system itself. Unlike its Japanese counterpart, the U.S. PSX2 will feature a drive bay for a 3.5" hard drive and an expansion unit for a network interface to be sold separately.

HIDEO KOJIMA'S MASTERPIECE

On the day before E3 officially began, the man behind 1998's Metal Gear Solid officially unveiled the sequel: "Metal Gear Solid: Sons of Liberty" for the PlayStation 2. In a screening theater on the Universal Studios lot, the gaming press was treated to an 9-minute film "trailer" of the new game (which was subsequently shown at the Konami booth during the rest of E3). Not only does the game seem to take full advantage of the power of the PS2 - the amazing preview consisted of actual gameplay, not cinema scenes - but it also maintains the cinematic feel that made the original so popular. MGS:SOL is scheduled for a 2001 release.

DINO CRISIS 2 FOR PS

Despite discussions of continuing the franchise on the PlayStation2, Capcom has announced that their sequel to 1999's Dino Crisis game will be released for the original PlayStation this October. Although DC2 has abandoned the

polygonal environments for pre-rendered backgrounds, it lets players to choose between two different characters, allows the use of two weapons simultaneously, and features underwater, action among other enhancements.

ACADEMY OF INTERACTIVE ARTS AND SCIENCES AWARDS

Final Fantasy VIII was chosen Adventure/RPG of the year by the members of the AISA. The game also won awards for art direction and animation. Other PlayStation games receiving honors included Medal of Honor (for sound design) and Um Jammer Lammy (for original music composition). The awards were presented at a ceremony hosted by actor/comedian Martin Short.

EIDOS ACQUIRES FREE RADICAL'S TIME SPLITTERS

The rumor about a new PS2 shooter from ex-Rare programmers is true, but the game is going to be released by Eidos rather than Sony. Titled Time Splitters, the game is an ultra-fast FPS that puts Unreal Tournament to shame. The most intriguing feature was a sophisticated level editor which allows players to create their own death match areas, using a variety of tile sets, lighting, and so forth. Such arenas can be created easily in minutes and use very little memory card space. With the Internet capabilities of the PS2, it is possible that gamers may be able to upload and download their created levels. The game is being developed by Free Radical and will reach store shelves soon after the PS2 launches in October.

READY TO RUMBLE 2 HIDDEN CELEBRITIES REVEALED

It had been rumored that real-life celebrities would make an appearance as playable characters in Midway's Ready to Rumble sequel. But, who? At E3, we finally learned the answer - Michael Jackson will be trading his sequined glove in for the boxing type, while moonwalking around the ring. The NBA's MVP, Shaquille O'Neal, will also be playable in the R2R sequel, set to be released for both PS and PS2 this November.

E3 WRAPUP

Editors' choice - Top 25 games at the show.

DAVE WINDING

PS2
DARK CLOUD. SCEA
GT2000. SCEA
SMUGGLER'S RUN. ROCKSTAR
MAODEN 2001. EA
TIME SPLITTERS. EDOS
ICO. SCEA
MGS2. KONAMI
MUNCH'S ODYSSEY. INFOGRAAMES
THE WORLD IS NOT ENOUGH. EA
SSX SNOWBOARDING. EA
RAYMAN 2. UBI SOFT
THE GETAWAY. SCEA
RED FACTION. THQ
TRACK & FIELD. KONAMI
MIDNIGHT CLUB. ROCKSTAR
ARMORED CORE 2. AMTEC
SARGE'S HEROES 2. 3DO
ETERNAL BLADE. MATTEL INTERACTIVE
OYNASTY WARRIORS. KOEI
RIDGE RACER 5. NAMCO
ONI MUSHU. CAPCOM
THE BOUNCER. SQUARESOFT
WIPEOUT FUSION. SCEA
ONI. ROCKSTAR
TEKKEN TAG TOURNAMENT. NAMCO

PS1
SPYRO 3. SCEA
ALADODIN. SCEA
EMPOWERER'S NEW GROOVE. SCEA
GAMEBOY 2001. SCEA
MAODEN 2001. EA
THE WORLD IS NOT ENOUGH. EA
RAYMAN 2. UBI SOFT
DONALD DUCK. UBI SOFT
EVIL DEAD. THQ
MS. PAC MAN MAZE MADNESS. NAMCO
CRASH BASH. SCEA
TONY HAWK 2. ACTIVISION
SPIROEMAN. ACTIVISION
ORIVER 2. INFOGRAAMES
SIMPSON'S WRESTLING. FOX INTERACTIVE
WWT: SMACKDOWN 2. THQ
ALIEN RESURRECTION. FOX INTERACTIVE
FROGGER 2. HASBRO INTERACTIVE
BUZZ LIGHTYEAR OF STAR COMMAND. ACTIVISION
LEGEND OF ORAGOON. SCEA
ULTIMATE FIGHTING CHAMPIONSHIP. CRAVE
TENCHU 2. ACTIVISION
ALONE IN THE DARK: NEW NIGHTMARE. INFOGRAAMES
BREAKOUT. HASBRO INTERACTIVE
MEDAL OF HONOR: UNDERGROUND. EA

GARY STRASSBERG

PS2
METAL GEAR SOLID 2: SONS OF LIBERTY. KONAMI
TIME SPLITTERS. EDOS
THE WORLD IS NOT ENOUGH. EA
GT 2000. SCEA
LEGACY OF KAIN: SOUL REAVER 2. EDOS
TEKKEN TAG TOURNAMENT. NAMCO
NASCAR 2001. EA
DYNASTY WARRIORS II. KOEI
OOO-WORLD: MUNCH'S OODYSSEY. INFOGRAAMES
MAODEN NFL 2001. EA
THE GETAWAY. SCEA
FINAL FANTASY X. SQUARESOFT
KNOCKOUT KINGS 2001. EA
BIG SSX. EA
Z.O.E. (ZONE OF ENDERS). KONAMI
DARK CLOUD. SCEA

KESSEN. KOEI
RIDGE RACER V. NAMCO
ARMORED CORE 2. AGTEC
WIPEOUT FUSION. SCEA
THE GETAWAY. SCEA
OEO OR ALIVE 2. TECMO
SUMMONER. THQ
GUNSLINGER. ACTIVISION
SWING AWAY GOLF. EA

PS1
SPIROEMAN. ACTIVISION
THE LEGEND OF ORAGOON. SCEA
PARASITE EVE 2. SQUARESOFT
MEDAL OF HONOR UNDERGROUND. EA
FINAL FANTASY IX. SQUARESOFT
X. MEN: MUTANT ACADEMY. ACTIVISION
COLONY WARS: RED SUN. MIDWAY
TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 2. ACTIVISION
STAR TREK: INVASION. ACTIVISION
ALIEN RESURRECTION. FOX INTERACTIVE
KING: MASTER OF BUSHOO. THQ
GRAND SESSION. SCEA
FEAR EFFECT: RETRO HELIX. EDOS
TENCHU 2: BIRTH OF THE ASSASSINS. ACTIVISION
RAYMAN 2. UBI SOFT
DEVIL 2. SCEA
MATT HOFFMAN'S PRO BMX. ACTIVISION
SPYRO 3: YEAR OF THE DRAGON. SCEA
DRIVER 2. INFOGRAAMES
SURF RIDERS. UBI SOFT
EVIL DEAD: HAIL TO THE KING. THQ
BLAQUE. ACTIVISION
CRASH BASH. SCEA
DINO CRISIS 2. CAPCOM
BUST. A. GROOVE 2. ENX

GREG OFF

PS2
METAL GEAR SOLID 2: SONS OF LIBERTY. KONAMI
MAODEN NFL 2001. EA
TIMESPLITTERS. EDOS
RAYMAN 2: ENHANCED VERSION. UBI SOFT
DISNEY'S DONALD DUCK. UBI SOFT
GT 2000. SCEA
SMUGGLER'S RUN. ROCKSTAR
MIDNIGHT CLUB. ROCKSTAR
ZONE OF ENDERS. KONAMI
TEKKEN TAG TOURNAMENT. NAMCO
ONI MUSHU. CAPCOM
THE WORLD IS NOT ENOUGH. EA
DARK CLOUD. SCEA
WIPEOUT FUSION. SCEA
ONI MUSHU. CAPCOM
MUNCH'S OOO-WORLD OODYSSEY. INFOGRAAMES
INTERNATIONAL TRACK AND FIELD. KONAMI
THE BOUNCER. SQUARESOFT
STAR WARS: STARFIGHTER. LUCASARTS
ARMORED CORE 2. AMTEC
SSX SNOWBOARDING. EA
LEGACY OF KAIN: SOUL REAVER 2. EDOS
DEAD OR ALIVE 2. TECMO
GUNSLINGER. ACTIVISION
SUMMONER. THQ

PS1
SPIROEMAN. ACTIVISION
MEDAL OF HONOR: UNDERGROUND. EA
ORIVER 2. INFOGRAAMES
MS. PAC. MAN: MAZE MADNESS. NAMCO
RAYMAN 2. UBI SOFT
DISNEY'S DONALD DUCK. UBI SOFT
CRASH BASH
SPYRO 3: YEAR OF THE DRAGON. SCEA

ALADODIN. SCEA
ALONE IN THE DARK: NEW NIGHTMARE. INFOGRAAMES
EVIL DEAD: HAIL TO THE KING. THQ
TONY HAWK 2. ACTIVISION
ALIEN RESURRECTION. FOX INTERACTIVE
OINO CRISIS 2. CAPCOM
FINAL FANTASY IX. SQUARESOFT
TENCHU 2: BIRTH OF THE ASSASSINS. ACTIVISION
STAR WARS: DEMOLITION. LUCASARTS
BREAKOUT. HASBRO INTERACTIVE
FROGGER 2. HASBRO INTERACTIVE
SIMPSON'S WRESTLING. FOX INTERACTIVE
PARASITE EVE 2. SQUARESOFT
THE GRINCH. KONAMI
102 DALMATIANS. EDOS
BLAQUE. ACTIVISION
MORT THE CHICKEN. CRAVE

MARK ANDROVICH

PS2
METAL GEAR SOLID 2. KONAMI
ODD-WORLD: MUNCH'S OODYSSEY. INFOGRAAMES
TIME SPLITTERS. EDOS
GRAND TURISMO 2000. SCEA
THE WORLD IS NOT ENOUGH. EA
SMUGGLER'S RUN. ROCKSTAR
RIDGE RACER V. NAMCO
MAODEN NFL 2001. EA
TEKKEN TAG TOURNAMENT. NAMCO
SSX SNOWBOARDING. EA
STAR WARS: EPISODE 1: STARFIGHTER. LUCASARTS
GUNSLINGER. ACTIVISION
ICO. SCEA
ONI. ROCKSTAR
THE GETAWAY. SCEA
READY 2 RUMBLE 2. MIDWAY
ONIMUSHU. CAPCOM
RED FACTION. THQ
MIDNIGHT CLUB: STREET RACING. ROCKSTAR
RAYMAN 2. UBI SOFT
THE BOUNCER. SQUARESOFT
DONALD DUCK. UBI SOFT
DYNASTY WARRIORS. KOEI
SARGE'S HEROES 2. 3DO
ARMORED CORE 2. AGTEC

PS1
SPIROEMAN. ACTIVISION
ALIEN RESURRECTION. FOX INTERACTIVE
STAR TREK: INVASION. ACTIVISION
MEDAL OF HONOR UNDERGROUND. EA
TENCHU 2. EA
ALONE IN THE DARK: NEW NIGHTMARE. INFOGRAAMES
EVIL DEAD: HAIL TO THE KING. THQ
OEO. MIDWAY
STAR WARS: DEMOLITION. LUCASARTS
MS. PAC MAN MAZE MADNESS. NAMCO
THE WORLD IS NOT ENOUGH. EA
TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 2. ACTIVISION
FEAR EFFECT: RETRO HELIX. EDOS
O07 RACING. EA
DRIVER 2. INFOGRAAMES
OINO CRISIS 2. CAPCOM
BREAKOUT. HASBRO INTERACTIVE
SIMPSON'S WRESTLING. FOX INTERACTIVE
TEAM BUDDIES. MIDWAY
YOU CANNOT KNOW JACK VOL. 2. BENTLEY SYSTEMS
FROGGER 2. HASBRO INTERACTIVE
GALAGA. HASBRO INTERACTIVE
LOONEY TUNES RACING. INFOGRAAMES
SURF RIDERS. UBI SOFT
DANGER GIRL. THQ



3DO



ARMY MEN: AIR ATTACK 2



SS: HIGH HEAT 2001



WORLD DESTRUCTION LEAGUE



ARMY MEN: AIR ATTACK 2

CAPCOM



DINO CRISIS 2



RE: SURVIVOR



BREATH OF FIRE VI



MEGA MAN LEGENDS 2

Codemasters



COLIN MCRACE RALLY 2



WORLD TOUR CHAMPIONSHIP



MICRO MANIACS



MIKE TYSON BOXING

CRAVE



MORT THE CHICKEN



SNO CROSS RACING



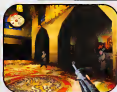
UFC



MORT THE CHICKEN



MOH: UNDERGROUND



MOH: UNDERGROUND



THE WORLD IS NOT ENOUGH



THE WORLD IS NOT ENOUGH

EIDOS
INTERACTIVE



102 DALMATIANS



FI GRAN PRIX 2000



FEAR EFFECT: RETRO HELIX



SYDNEY 2000



BATMAN BEYOND



BATMAN BEYOND



BATMAN BEYOND



BATMAN BEYOND



STAR WARS: DEMOLITION



STAR WARS: DEMOLITION



STAR WARS: DEMOLITION



STAR WARS: DEMOLITION



AKkaim
entertainment inc.



MARY KATE & ASHLEY



ECW HARDCORE RULZ



HBO BOXING



RICKY CARMICHAEL 2



VANISHING POINT



ECW HARDCORE RULZ



HBO BOXING



VANISHING POINT

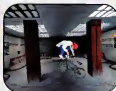
ACTIVISION



BLADE



BUZZ LIGHTYEAR



MATT HOFFMAN BMX



SPIDERMAN



STAR TREK: INVASION



TENCHU 2



TONY HAWK 2



X-MEN: MUTANT ACADEMY

MATTEL



BILLABONG PRO SURFER



ROCK 'EM SOCK 'EM ROBOTS



BILLABONG PRO SURFER



ROCK 'EM SOCK 'EM ROBOTS

SOUTHPEAK
INTERACTIVE



FUNSTONES BOWLING



FUNSTONES BOWLING



FUNSTONES BOWLING



FUNSTONES BOWLING

SQUARESOFT



FINAL FANTASY IX



PARASITE EVE 2



FINAL FANTASY IX



PARASITE EVE 2

THQ



DANGER GIRL



MTV: PURE RIDE



MTV: SKATEBOARDING



EVIL DEAD



**EA
SPORTS**



KNOCKOUT KINGS 2001



MADDEN NFL 2001



NCAA FOOTBALL 2001



TRIPLE PLAY 2001



KNOCKOUT KINGS 2001



MADDEN NFL 2001



NCAA FOOTBALL 2001



TRIPLE PLAY 2001

**INFOGRAVES
ENTERTAINMENT**



BUGS & TAZ TIME BLASTERS



HOGS OF WAR



KOUDELKA



LOONEY TUNES RACING



NGEN RACING



POWER SPIKE VOLLEYBALL



SHEEP, DOG 'N WOLF



TEST DRIVE CYCLES



COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT



ALADDIN



CRASH BASH



EMPEROR'S NEW GROOVE



SPYRO: YEAR OF THE DRAGON



COOL BOARDERS 4



GRIND SESSION



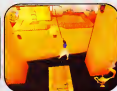
NHL FACEOFF 2001



MLB 2001



LEGEND OF DRAGOON



ALADDIN



CRASH BASH



MILLIONAIRE



NBA SHOOTOUT 2001



NCAA FINAL FOUR 2001



NFL GAMEDAY 2001



NCAA GAMEBREAKER 2001



MLB 2001



NFL GAMEDAY 2001



NBA SHOOTOUT 2001



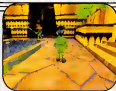
NHL FACEOFF 2001



THE GRINCH



WOODY WOODPECKER RACING



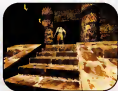
MONSTER FORCE



THE GRINCH



BEST OUTDOOR GAMES



THE MUMMY



THE MUMMY



MLS GAME NIGHT

Ubi Soft
entertainment



ALL STAR TENNIS 2000



BATMAN ADVENTURE



F1 RACING CHAMPIONSHIP



INFESTATION



DINOSURV



DONALD DUCK



JUNGLE BOOK



SURF RIDERS

e3 WRAPUP

PSS All the PlayStation2 games from the show

PS2

SII



ARMY MEN: AIR ATTACK 2



ARMY MEN: SARGE'S HEROES 2



WARRIORS OF MIGHT & MAGIC



WORLD DESTRUCTION LEAGUE

AKKlaim



ALL STAR BASEBALL 2002



FERRARI 360 CHALLENGE



FERRARI 360 CHALLENGE



ALL STAR BASEBALL 2002

ACTIVISION



STREET LETHAL



GUNSLINGER



GUNSLINGER



STREET LETHAL

age of



ARMORED CORE 2



ETERNAL RING



EVERGRACE



ARMORED CORE 2



EIDOS INTERACTIVE



SOUL REAVER 2



SOUL REAVER 2



SOUL REAVER 2



SOUL REAVER 2



TIMESPLITTERS



TIMESPLITTERS



TIMESPLITTERS



TIMESPLITTERS



INFOGRAMES
ENTERTAINMENT



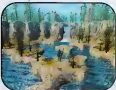
MUNCH'S ODDYSEE



MUNCH'S ODDYSEE



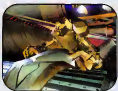
MUNCH'S ODDYSEE



MUNCH'S ODDYSEE



MOTOR MAYHEM



MOTOR MAYHEM



MOTOR MAYHEM



MOTOR MAYHEM



FIFA 2001



KNOCKOUT KINGS 2001



MADDEN NFL 2000



NASCAR 2001



TIGER WOODS 2001



NBA LIVE 2001



NHL 2001



SNOWBOARDING SSX



MADDEN NFL 2000



MADDEN NFL 2000



MADDEN NFL 2000



MADDEN NFL 2000



KNOCKOUT KINGS 2001



FIFA 2001



NBA LIVE 2001



NASCAR 2001



TIGER WOODS 2001



SWING AWAY GOLF



SNOWBOARDING SSX



NHL 2001



METAL GEAR SOLID 2



INT. TRACK & FIELD 2000



INT. TRACK & FIELD 2000



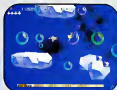
METAL GEAR SOLID 2



ZONE OF ENDERS



X GAMES SNOWBOARDING



GRADIUS III & IV



ZONE OF ENDERS



STAR WARS: STAR FIGHTER



STAR WARS: STAR FIGHTER



STAR WARS: STAR FIGHTER



STAR WARS: STAR FIGHTER



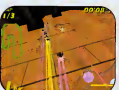
STAR WARS: BOMBER RACING



STAR WARS: BOMBER RACING



STAR WARS: BOMBER RACING



STAR WARS: BOMBER RACING



SWK200



DARK CLOUD



DRAIKAN



DROPSHIP



EXTERMINATION



FANTAVISION



GT 2000



GT 2000



FORMULA 1 2000



THE GETAWAY



GT 2000



GT 2000



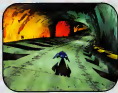
THE GETAWAY



WIPEOUT: FUSION



WIPEOUT: FUSION



WIPEOUT: FUSION



WIPEOUT: FUSION



DARK CLOUD



DRAIKAN



DROPSHIP



SPIN SPRINT CBR RACING



CAPCOM



ONI MUSHU



ONI MUSHU



STREET FIGHTER EX3



STREET FIGHTER EX3



X SQUAD



X SQUAD



THE WORLD IS NOT ENOUGH



THE WORLD IS NOT ENOUGH

KEMCO



TOP GEAR: DARE DEVIL



TOP GEAR: DARE DEVIL



TOP GEAR: DARE DEVIL



TOP GEAR: DARE DEVIL

MIDWAY



LEGION: LEGEND OF EXCALIBUR



READY 2 RUMBLE 2



READY 2 RUMBLE 2



LEGION: LEGEND OF EXCALIBUR



ROCKSTAR



MIDNIGHT CLUB



SMUGGLER'S RUN



ONI



MIDNIGHT CLUB

SQUARESOFT



THE BOUNCER



THE BOUNCER



DRIVING EMOTION



DRIVING EMOTION



RED FACTION



RED FACTION



SUMMONER



SUMMONER

Ubi Soft



RAYMAN 2: ENHANCED



RAYMAN 2: ENHANCED



RAYMAN 2: ENHANCED



RAYMAN 2: ENHANCED

WATER ARROWS



WATER ARROWS

Nothing could compare to the mystical powers of The Divine Tree. Massive, yet graceful, it gave birth to all living things. But the beauty of the tree could not hide an ugly blemish in the land of floating cities. The Wargles reigned superior. The Dragons



E3 Takes ...by Eric

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Having covered all five annual E3 events (3 in LA, 2 in Atlanta), there's a certain familiarity that you have when first arriving to the show. Most of the companies' booths are set up just like they were the year before (and the year before that), with the slight modification being that this time around they are in a different location. For example, if it wasn't for the fact that the EA Sports game banners all read "2001" (ie, FIFA 2001), I would have thought I was having a flashback from a previous E3. The same big screen, the same type of banners, and all the floor monitors in the same general patterns.



Another thing that was really evident was the lackluster showing of competing platforms, specifically Nintendo and the PC types. The Nintendo booth was a virtual ghost town, drawing little to no interest from the attendees. Even though they'll have three of the biggest selling software titles this year (Perfect Dark, Zelda & Banjo sequels), it still wasn't enough of an attraction for the hardened media folks. And, the PC stuff? For a multitude of reasons, I'm sure, there was likely 1/10th the amount of companies and products on the floor as compared to last year's show. Normally, in terms of size, the "Big 3" — Sony, Nintendo, & Sega — have booths that dwarf everybody else. For a visual reference, compare the size of the states of Texas and Rhode Island, and you get the idea. The second tier, in terms of square footage, goes to the EA's, Namco's, Capcom's, Midway's, and Eidos' of the gaming world. Lastly, the very small areas go to the peripheral manufacturers, small game publishers, and yes, even magazine publishers! Well, the Big 3 still towered over the other booths, it's just that there weren't as many booths around them.



Overall, the impression left on me after one day of "E3ing" was that there wasn't as much energy as normal, but there was definitely a hint of "change" in the air. Kinda like "the calm before the storm".

WHERE HAVE ALL THE EXHIBITORS GONE?

The small booths and "meeting rooms" used to make up a decent percentage of exhibitors at E3. The companies that had maybe 2 or 3 titles, or the ones that were just getting into the business, are the kinds that occupied these areas. But, they have all but disappeared from the E3 landscape, along with some of the bigger publishers, as well. For instance, GT Interactive, which always had a large booth, has been completely wiped off the face of the E3 map and, along with Accolade, has been melded into the Infogrames company. Electronic Arts is another company that has swallowed many competitors whole, and therefore what would have been 5 or 6 additional smaller booths, has instead transformed into a single (not necessarily larger) booth.

As we have predicted a few times in the past, one day there may only be a handful of videogame publishers, and the reality of this occurring seems to be getting closer everyday.

HOW MANY KART-STYLE RACING GAMES?

As I continued to drag my ACL-damaged right knee around the show, I was struck by the number of PlayStation titles that are coming out this year. For whatever reason, I was under the impression that things were starting to wind down, as game developers started working on PS2 titles. Well, color me stupid, because there are a TON of new games coming out, and the popular genre seems to be kart style racing. If there's a license out there that DOESN'T have a kart game associated with it, I have not seen it! Looney Tunes, Woody Woodpecker, Star Wars, the Muppets, and the Smurfs, to name a few.





BOOTH BABES

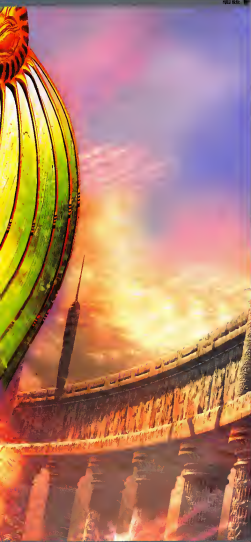
Always a staple at trade shows of any kind, the Booth Babe (aka Booth Betty, Booth Bimbo, or Bodacious Beauty) REALLY stands out at an event like E3. Why? Well, gather 20,000 GIB's (Geeks in Black), then place a PLAYBOY BUNNY every thirty feet, and you can see how



they might "get noticed". It's actually a sad commentary on women and such, but I'll let Androvich handle that issue in his next "Hot Topic" column! Anyway, this year's theme for booth babes may have been "quality over quantity", because there were much fewer BB's running around than usual, BUT the



were a powerful race in their own right. And the humans lived as slaves. Divided by razed, a battle for freedom would ensue. Armed with the spirit of the Dragon, the humans prevailed. And all races now live in peaceful harmony. But beneath the



HUGO BOSS

THUO KITE

tranquility lurks a mysterious prophecy. The emergence of an eternal force, worshipped, yet feared, no one knows what its presence will bring. Infinite peace and happiness for all? Or the darkest evil imaginable?



ones there were all USDA Choice (afterall, if you're going to be paraded around like meat, you might as well be graded as such). Our award for Best of Show (girls) goes to the lovely ladies in silver, who cheerfully and dutifully handed out the E3 Daily to gawkers-by. Second place goes to the "Wanna Play" girls... nice shirts!



SPEAKING OF GEEKS IN BLACK

What is it with the stereotypical computer dweeb and black clothes? I can understand chicks liking to wear it, because black will supposedly hide the pounds. But dudes? What... does black hide the "dweebiness" in dudes? Just the contrast between the dark shirts and the skin-that-hasn't-seen-daylight-in-a-decade is enough to make you cover your eyes for fear of being blinded. Maybe it's just me and my pink shirt, but guys, there are OTHER colors out there. Maybe you've heard of them: Blue, Green, Yellow, Red. Ringing any bells??? No? Fine, go back inside and play some more Warcraft. Oh, and don't even get me started on general hygiene.

THERE'S A RINGING IN MY HEAD

Every year, some company has to blast out "music" for everyone to hear. And, I mean everyone — everyone nearby, everyone at the convention center, everyone in LA! There's nothing like sitting in on a meeting and not being able to hear what the person is saying because company X has got 10,000 watts pumping. This year, credit goes to Edos (as it usually does) for being the perpetrator of hearing loss to the 20,000 aforementioned GIB's (my hearing is already gone thanks to 20 years of drum playing). And, what exactly was Edos trying to hype? Their best game (Time Splitters) wasn't even displayed on the show floor!





DAVE WINDING

Obviously, any "Top 3" list is going to be very personal and will reflect the individual's tastes — mine is no different. What struck me about E3 2000 was the sheer number of what look to be quality games — particularly for PS2. There were a number of potentially great games (Tecmo's "Dead or Alive 2" and SCEA's "Extermination" come immediately to mind) that didn't make my list because they are not the style of game that I enjoy, or there simply wasn't enough information available to get a feel for the game. In the case of SquareSoft's "The Bouncer," I made the assumption that the game is going to turn out to be something — based solely on Square's reputation for quality, what the company had on display was nothing more than (basically) the same movie that we've all seen before and limited action scenes (even though they tell us that the game is 75% complete at this point). My gut tells me that this is going to turn out to be a movie with some "Final Fight" style action thrown in the mix, but I am willing to give Square the benefit of the doubt, for now. Outbros in its absence was GameDay for PS2. With EA's Madden making such a strong statement on the PS2 at the show, everybody was expecting SCEA/999 to have a counter-punch ready... No such luck. Again, based on past successes, I am willing to give the development team the benefit of the doubt, but it sure would have been nice to get a glimpse of the game. Lastly, Edos developed the HUGE PS2 surprise of the show when they announced that "Timesplitters" — the FPS developed by some of the former members of Rare's "Goldeneye" team, would be ready at hardware launch. Edos looked like they weren't going to be ready for PS2 before the show — now they have, potentially, its biggest first year title. Oh, one more thing. No matter what anybody tells you about MGSS, don't believe them — it is even better than that. It may be a year away, but it is simply the most amazing thing you've ever seen — a truly interactive, 3D movie experience.

The PlayStation was not left behind, but you're not going to see a whole lot in the way of new gaming experiences in 2000. Almost everything is a sequel or a new twist on an existing franchise, and many of the games are skewed to a younger audience. I was able to spend a good amount of time with the new Aladdin, Spyro: Year of the Dragon, Crash Bash and The Emperor's New Groove and am excited about the new Medal of Honor sequel and (against my better judgement) EA's PS version of The World is Not Enough (it looks great... I just hope they don't blow the gameplay again and actually finish the game this time).

Let's just say I spent all of my time hanging around Sony and its third party companies. I did get a chance to look at all of the Sega, Nintendo and PC products as well. I think Sega had a very strong showing this E3 and that they should be able to hang around for another year (at least until X-Box and Dolphin hit the market) and Nintendo had their typical 2-3 killer titles, surrounded by an ever-dwindling number of third party titles. Stand outs? Perfect Dark (N64), Rush 2049 (DC), Test Drive V-Rally (DC), Oregon's Lair 3D (PC (maybe PS2)). Quake 3 Arena (DC), Conker's Bad Fur Day (N64), Donkey Kong Country (GBC), Phantasy Star Online (DC), and World Series Baseball 2K1 (DC).

Well, that was my show. We'll spend the rest of the year (and well into next) discovering which of these games live up to their potential and which land in the also-ran category. But, with so much potentially great stuff, it's going to be easy to find great games to play this holiday season.

GARY STRASSBURG

As the sweetest and least-jaded member of the PS Extreme team, it is my job to provide the "first-timers" take on the incredible spectacle known as E3. The other guys have pretty much "been there, done that" before — but the flashing lights, giant video screens, enhancing game demos and beautiful boob babes were all new for me.

At first, I felt like the proverbial kid in a candy store, trying to hit every single booth in the very first day, not wanting to miss a thing. Needless to say, my nerves quickly wore off when my feet got so sore I could hardly walk anymore — and I had yet to even scratch the surface of the thousands of games on display! When I wasn't busy watching game videos, playing floor demos, or tagging along with Greg for back-room meetings, I was introducing myself to all of the companies that manufacture PlayStation peripherals. This in itself took more than a day, since they were spread out all over the place, but as the new peripheral reviewer for the magazine, I wanted to do a thorough job.

Unfortunately, I also made the rookie mistake of loading up on SWAG too early in the day, and found myself lugging around thirty-pound bags of magazines, T-shirts, key chains and countless other trinkets I probably

didn't need. I eventually wised up and started saying "no thanks" to the booth babes who were giving the stuff away (which was no easy feat — trust me). And somehow, I still had to borrow an extra duffel bag from Mark Androvich just to haul all of my stuff home after the final day!

But what about the games, you say? Well, it was the first time I had actually seen any PS2 games — let alone played them — and I was very impressed by the first generation of titles. As most will agree, the show was stolen the day before it even started by the world premiere of Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty, which is expected sometime next year. Oozing with atmosphere, depth and realistic detail, the 9-minute video clip drew cheers from over 100 worldly journalists who have pretty much seen it all, and it easily was the best-looking title to be shown.

However, that's not to say that the other PS2 games were slouches. In fact, the Electronic Arts booth was loaded with great-looking titles, many of which made my Top 25 list. I literally found myself doing double-takes when I saw Madden 2001 and NASCAR 2001 on the big-screen TV — was this live sports footage I was watching, or actual video games? Only prolonged scrutiny could distinguish the difference.

Edos gave us another reason to be excited during a behind-closed-doors preview of Timesplitters, an incredibly sweet first-person shooter from some of the masterminds behind Goldeneye for the N64. This PS2 game was looking super-fast and fluid with all kinds of jaw-dropping effects — and that was in the four-player, split-screen mode! We also got to see how quick and easy the impressive level editor is, which launched this extremely promising title right to the top of my list, behind only Metal Gear 2.

As far as playable PS2 titles go, most of my hands-on time was spent playing GT 2000, Tekken Tag Tournament and Kessen, all of which look like exciting launch titles. I also got to frag some geekboy buff playing Unreal Tournament on the PS2, which was linked up with a number of consoles to give gamers a multi-player experience. While the graphics were good, the controls took some getting used to, leading me to hope for keyboard and mouse support in the final version. That would kick ass!

I also was happy to see a lot of great PS1 games on display, and many of my favorites were set up in the busy Activision booth. I couldn't wait to get my hands on Spider Man, X-Men: Mutant Academy, Tony Hawk 2, Star Trek: Invasion and Tenchu 2! Mind you, E3 is not the best place to spend quality time playing video games, because you often have to wait in line for your two minutes of play time, and there's so much noise and activity going on all around you that it's hard to get into the game. Standing up while you play doesn't help much either, so I am greatly looking forward to some serious "couch time" with all of these titles in the future.

Now I can't wait until next year's show!

GREG OFF

For me, this year's E3 was a mixture of highs and lows. While the positives outnumbered the negatives, going in I was truly optimistic that there would be more of a strong showing for the PlayStation2 and mildly disappointed when I found there were not as many groundbreaking titles as I had hoped. While it's not to say that there weren't a multitude of potentially great games on display that could be ready in time for the launch this October, I guess I was hoping for a little bit more. I can explain this by the fact that, even with the few A+ games out in Japan (namely Ridge Racer V and Tekken Tag Tournament), there hasn't been anything strikingly "next generation" available for the black box. I'm still waiting for the "emotion" to be etched out of the Emotion Engine and, while I'm certain Metal Gear Solid 2 will be the first to deliver on that promise, I was kind of hoping for maybe one or two more, and maybe a little sooner. As they say, patience is a virtue. In the meantime, I will be happy as a clam with titles such as Madden 2001, Dark Cloud, Time Splitters, Munch's Oddysee, Rayman 2, Donald Duck, Smuggler's Run, The Getaway and The World is Not Enough.

The obvious highlight of the show was the debut of Hideo Kojima's Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty. While some of the other developers were winning that only one movie was being shown (hence, the video was obviously not gameplay), I strongly believe that what was on display was all from the in-game graphic engine and game. Kojima-san himself said he was the one playing the game in the video and if he says it is so, then it's good enough for me! If you've seen the footage (which is available for download from just about any gaming site), you will know why everyone is so excited. We assure you that as soon as Konami makes more info and screens available, they will be in the magazine.

As far as original PlayStation titles go, the general consensus is that

everyone is looking to target the "mass market", which translates into games for 12 year olds. While this isn't necessarily a bad thing, hardcore gamers are going to have to pick and choose wisely. There are still a good amount of PS1 titles being produced that have me excited, such as Dino Crisis 2, Spider-Man, Medal of Honor: Underground, Tenchu 2, Driver 2, Alone in the Dark and Evil Dead.

While Eric, Mark and Gary were going around and soliciting free swag and pictures from the bevy of booth babes, I was pulling the old "meet and greet" with just about every PlayStation developer and publisher on the show floor. If nothing else, E3 is a great time to play catch up with everyone in the industry — except you have to do it in hurried, half hour intervals if you want to make your next appointment. As usual, I failed miserably at this (who's idea was it to make the South and West halls of the LA Convention Center so freakin' far apart?). My sincerest apologies go out there to Interplay who, due to my bad scheduling, fell by the wayside.

Of course, E3 isn't all about business. Heck, it's video games. And there were the typical round of parties this year. While Eidos finally decided to save some bucks and sit this one out, Gamers.com stormed the Playboy Mansion and Sega, Nintendo and Sony held their usual festivities. Like last year, this year's Sony party was held at their Sony Studios lot and heading the bill was Grammy winner Macy Gray.

I expect the next year will be full of surprises as Sony settles in with their new console. I'm just glad that I get to be here in the front seat, with all of you along for the ride as it all unfolds.

MARK ANDROVICH

It's that time of year again, when those in the videogame industry come together in La-La land for three days of fun in the sun (and smog). Time to see which PR guys and gals switched teams during the off-season; Time to see which company hired the best (but not necessarily the brightest) booth models; Time to see what happened to those no-show "must-see" games from last year's E3.

As this was my second E3, I made the wise move to bring an extra duffel bag for the tons of fliers, disks, paper, T-shirts, key chains, and other swag. My personal favorites were an Alien face hugger beanie baby and an infogames bowling shirt with a cocktail patch and dice for buttons (I have no idea what game, if any, it was supposed to promote). I also remembered to bring dozens of granola bars and bottled water — no more shelling out \$8.50 for pizza slices and a Coke this year!

For all the talk of videogames appealing to a wider demographic, you wouldn't know it to look at the physical appearance of the attendees. There was either the disheveled, slightly overweight, pasty white, glasses-wearing group or the sunny, bloodshot-eyed, tattooed, scruffy facial haired, dark T-shirt-wearing group. The winding clan, neatly clad in their khakis and button-down shirts, stuck out like Nordstrom models. While I matched their look, thanks to my wife selecting my clothes before the trip, it was in a "man-me" sort of way. Believe me, it isn't easy to hang out with a group of guys all well over 6 feet tall (for the record: DW: 6'-4", EW: 6'-5" and MW (the "runt") at 6'-2") when you are lucky to reach 5'6" on your tiptoes!

The show began on such a high note that it was impossible to generate much excitement during the course of the next three days. After the PlayStation2 was officially revealed to an appreciative audience, came the world-premiere of Metal Gear Solid: Sons of Liberty. This could be one of the greatest videogames of all time — nothing else at the show even came close! Unfortunately, MGS2 is still a year away from release, but there were a slew of games revealed that should keep us busy while we wait.

I'd be remiss if I failed to mention a disturbing trend — cart racing games. Just as the 16-bit consoles were overwhelmed by cookie-cutter side-scrolling games based upon licenses, the PlayStation is about to be inundated with cart racing titles. We will soon see racing games featuring Woody Woodpecker, Austin Powers, Looney Tunes, Star Wars, Smurfs, Wacky Racers, and the Muppets. Unfortunately, there isn't anything to distinguish these games from one another — except for the character licenses. As far as reviews are concerned, the cream will rise to the top — but will the better games be overlooked in a crowded market?

What can you expect to see in the next year? Two words — "mass market". It's that time in the PlayStation's life when companies will focus on titles meant to attract the younger and more casual players. When you see a game such as "Mary Kate & Ashley: Magical Mystery Moll," you know that it just may be time to move on. That doesn't mean that there won't be any great PS titles released this year — just look at our Top 25 lists — but the momentum is definitely shifting to the PS2.

BY: JEFF KRAVITZ



BY: JEFF KRAVITZ

THE LEGEND OF
THE DRAGON

THE END IS JUST THE BEGINNING.



After

The huge success of *GoldenEye* on the Nintendo 64, I was more than a little jealous there wasn't a Bond game available for the PlayStation. When *Tomorrow Never Dies* was officially announced, it seemed like we PlayStation hopefuls would finally get the chance to be a secret agent next on Sony's gray box. If you're a loyal reader, then you'll know that TND had a very stormy past—it was a development hell for over three years, changed publisher hands midstream, and was ultimately dumped on the market as a very sub-par product (half of the original ideas/modes were left on the cutting room floor). The final game was a rough and glitchy 3rd-person arcade experience which looked especially poor in comparison to Rare's 1st-person masterpiece. Fans of 007 who take their Bond very seriously (i.e. the *Wings*) were disgusted and disappointed (Dave rolled the game *S&T* in the January issue—he felt he was being kind). Thankfully, EA and Black Ops have the chance to redeem themselves this year with the next Bond installment. The World is Not Enough, knowing all too well that they failed to deliver (even though the game still sold extremely well due to the license and franchise), they are taking great pains to ensure that TWINE will be everything that TND wasn't. For starters, Black Ops has gone back to the drawing board and created an entirely new graphics engine from scratch. Much like *GoldenEye* on the N64, this new engine lets you see through the eyes of James Bond via a 1st-person perspective. Instead of your character being on-screen, in addition, there is more of an emphasis on balancing the action, exploration, and puzzle solving that in the last game. In *The World is Not Enough*, players will have to accomplish a series of detailed mission objectives in order to progress through the game. Not only will you have to rely on your Q-Lab weapons and gadgets (of which there are plenty), but you'll also have to use Bond-style wit to defeat the enemies and get the girl. Lastly, a revamped precision targeting system is being worked on for the game that promises pinpoint accuracy, using a weapon and/or gadget. Electronic Arts is poised to assist gamers with a barrage of Bond toward the end of the year.

published by EA
developed by Black Ops
percent complete 50
release! Late 2000

The World is Not Enough

007

no disrespect to Duke Nukem, many of the one-liners he is known for — "Come get some," "Groovy," and "Hail to the king, baby!" — were actually first vocalized by Bruce Campbell's character in the Evil Dead films. Campbell, known also for his television work in *Jack of All Trades* and *Xena*, is no stranger to video games — he provided the voice of *Pitfall Harry* in Activision's *Pitfall 3D: Return to the Jungle* for the PlayStation (and, as such, was the highlight of an otherwise dismal game). Now, he's set to provide the vocalizations in THQ's upcoming *Evil Dead: Hail to the King* videogame.

If you are at all familiar with the work of director Sam Raimi, you'll know that he successfully mixes over-the-top gore and action with dead-pan humor. Call it campy, if you will, but his films and

words

evil undead forces are once again crisscrossing over to our world through the Necronomicon Book of the Dead. Ash, our square-jawed, insult-spewing hero, is drawn back to the infamous cabin in the woods in order to save the world from being overrun.

The E3 preview version definitely looked like it was on the right track, with camera movements and angles that were definitely Raimi-esque. The backgrounds, though pre-rendered, were nicely animated, creating a disturbing and suspenseful environment. The King is not a game you'll want to play alone at night. Hopefully, the game will be able to skillfully combine the bloody action and signature humor with



television shows have definitely attracted a cult following. Will a videogame based upon the Evil Dead universe be able to capture the same magic? Developer Heavy Iron Studios is sure hoping so.

Hail to the King is a Resident Evil-style "survival horror" game. The action takes place eight years after the events of the *Army of Darkness* film, and contains a blend of favorite Evil Dead settings, as well as new locales. As for weapons, what Evil Dead game would be complete without a strap-on chainsaw, ax, rifle, and shotgun? There are 20 different types of horrific enemies and bosses to do battle against. While the exact storyline has not been revealed, it is expected to follow along the same lines as the films — in other



some interesting puzzle solving and exploration elements.

It looks like Capcom's *Resident Evil* series is finally getting a lot of competition in the survival horror genre this year, with games such as *Galerians*, *Countdown Vampires*, and *Alone in the Dark* (and, to a lesser extent, *Covert Ops: Nuclear Dawn*). *Evil Dead: Hail to the King* — with voice characterization by Bruce Campbell and input from Sam Raimi himself — should be able to stand out from the competition. We'll bring you further updates as more information becomes available. The game is currently scheduled to be released in the fall.

EVIL DEAD

HAIL TO THE KING

Mark

published by: THQ
developed by: Heavy Iron
percent complete: 75%
release: Fall 2000





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DUKE NUKEM PLANET OF THE BABES



The videogame industry is hardly a model for political correctness, with its large-breasted female characters and games featuring more firepower than an NRA convention. Still, there is something refreshing about the unapologetic attitude of the Duke Nukem series. The hero spouts muscled-filled one-liners, frequents strip bars, and has a fondness for beer and the "babes." Like Arnold Schwarzenegger, Sylvester Stallone, and Clint Eastwood rolled into one, for better or worse, Duke has become the archetypal male videogame hero.

First appearing on the PC as side-scrolling game, then later as a first-person shooter, Duke made the jump into 3D with 1998's "Time to Kill." The comparisons to Tomb Raider were inevitable — although Duke's game was not as deep, it was still a satisfying action/adventure game with plenty of attitude (earning it an "M" rating). Now he's back in a brand new quest — "Planet of the Babes" — but as is the case with Lara Croft, Duke's underlying videogame engine hasn't been modified much.

Graphics have never been Duke Nukem's strong point, and DN:POB is no exception. Although the camera works well, the textures aren't very detailed and the characters are fairly blocky. The game looks like a first or second generation PlayStation game, but nevertheless the gameplay is the thing. Duke's trademark attitude is still here in spades. First, consider the storyline: In the distant future, an alien race has killed all the males and enslaved the females. A group called the United Babe Resistance uses a time machine to pluck Duke from the past and enlist him to aid their cause. As usual, this means plenty of scantily-clad women, nasty animal enemies, a heavy metal soundtrack, and a huge arsenal of your disposal. There are also secret areas and high-tech devices such as a jetpack, teleporter, and x-ray goggles. But don't worry — this isn't Metal Gear Solid. There is no stealth involved, and no over-reliance on gadgetry, it's all about brute force.

As for the ribald humor, when picking up a payphone, Duke might hear the muffled words of "Throbbin' Wood: Prince of Beaves," a suggestive female, or a male voice yelling "Whaaaauuuup?!!!" After wasting a Pig Cop, Duke may comment "Pork...the other dead meat," and when approaching a babe he is likely to ask her to "Lay some sugar on me." If this sounds funny to you, the rest of the game is sure to be a laugh riot. Like Howard Stern, Duke's popularity stems from a style which, while hilarious in junior high school, starts to lose its appeal with the older crowd. Fortunately, for us "fuddy daddies," there is more to the game than just the immature jokes — there is also the simple joy to be found in blowing the crap out of everything.

The preview version was not quite complete, but



I was able to experience training areas along with the game's levels and 6 multiplayer "Dukematch" levels. Along with the computer-generated intros, the game includes real-time cinematics. The familiar Pig Cop enemies are now joined by Mutant Gorillas, and some of the "babes" actually fight beside our hero. But other than that, Duke Nukem: Planet of the Babes looks to be more of the same — which is not necessarily a bad thing. If you enjoyed Time to Kill, and have been waiting for another Duke "fix," here's another action/adventure game to satisfy your testosterone needs.

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NIGHTMARE

CREATURES
II

A few years back Activision released the original *Nightmare Creatures* — a game that took the “horror” out of the survival genre and parried it with arcade-style, hack ‘n’ slash fighting. The end result was a linear but fun romp through turn-of-the-century London, decapitating, severing, eviscerating and generally dismembering a variety of nasty creatures, as you embarked on a quest to defeat the evil occultist, Adam Crowley. While the game had its high points — a very well-done, third generation 3D engine, the ability to play as two different characters, as well as a convincingly moody and dark atmosphere — the inability to explore your surroundings (you were kept on a fairly restricted path — doors and areas you would logically think would be accessible were not) and the incessant and repetitive nature of constantly fighting one creature, then the next really limited the gameplay. Taking the negative feedback from the first game (which, by the way, still did fairly well on the PlayStation and N64), French developers Kalisto (located in scenic Bordeaux, France), decided to produce a PlayStation and Dreamcast sequel that would offer much, much more. Did they succeed? Unfortunately for you, you’ll have to humor me and read my review to find out (or, if you’re one of those people who head to the last page of a book before you even begin, you can just flip to the next spread and look for the “Bottom Line” box).

For those of you who are in this article for the long haul, allow me to outline the storyline for you: *Nightmare Creatures II* takes place exactly 100 years after the first (circa 1934). If you remember, in the original you controlled either Ignatius or



Nadia, two very different fighters (one a staff-wielding mage and the other an expert in the ancient martial arts and weapons combat) who had come together for a common bond — to defeat the stark-raving mad (and not to mention completely evil) Adam Crowley. In the vein of Dr. Frankenstein, this mad scientist was creating all sorts of heinous creatures and undead, then unleashing them into the night to wreak havoc against the unsuspecting populace. Crowley was eventually defeated (that is, if you actually beat the game) and died a terrible and nasty death.

As it turns out, it's hard to keep a good villain down. Somehow, a century later, Crowley was resurrected from the dead, becoming much stronger (and seriously more twisted) in the process. In the sequel, you play as Herbert Wallace, a tortured soul who, as part of the Circle — an elite group of men and women dedicated to defeating Crowley — has made it his personal vendetta to take Crowley down. Wallace was captured by Crowley and forced to undergo a barrage of sick and twisted experiments for Crowley's own amusement. What's left of him is a freakish mess — hair in patches, sunken eye sockets, tattered clothing and a shattered persona — living, quite literally on the edge of insanity. Unfortunately for Crowley, Herbert Wallace is exactly at the place where he needs to be in order to mercifully hack and chop his way through legions of undead and other vicious and foul creatures to get to him. It doesn't help that his good friend and companion, Rachel, is also in trouble.

The game starts out with Wallace in a padded cell of a sanitarium that was once run, but now abandoned, by Crowley. It seems Crowley's experiments have gotten free of their cells and are running loose through the asylum, giving you chance for escape in the process. From here, you'll set out on Crowley's trail, seemingly one step behind him everywhere you go. Expect to traverse and fight your way through dark city streets, graveyards, haunted manors, rooftops, sewers and mausoleums, in an effort to eliminate the scourge and take down the madman.

As far as fighting games



go, *Nightmare Creatures* offers up a solid challenge. The game mixes two distinct game engines into one — fighting and exploration. When in the exploration mode, Herbert can run, jump, climb ladders, pull himself up and over objects, swim, and interact with

his environment (including some really nice, detailed touches, such as kicking over chairs, crunching out maggots underneath his heel, and breaking through doors and obstacles). In the fighting mode, Herbert can rush his opponent, kick, block, hop from side-to-side, swing his axe, pull off a host of limb-severing combos (which must be uncovered), use a variety of lethal magics, power-ups and special weapons (such as pistols, freeze spells, wrath of god, etc.), and execute some of the most insane fatalities. These fatalities are enemy-specific (meaning you'll pull off the same one each time you encounter the same enemy) and are very simple to execute. To do so, you just have to whittle away at your opponent's health until the word "FATALITY" pops up in the top-right corner of the screen. When it does, you have just a few seconds to hit the

Square and X buttons simultaneously. If done correctly, you can then sit back and watch as the gory scene takes place. While

it might be cool to watch the first few times (one example has Herbert decapitating his enemy, then going to town hacking its lifeless body into bloody bits and pieces), by the hundredth time you'll be wishing there was a way you could skip the animation entirely. All of these moves are pulled off with an enormous number of frames

of animation, resulting in very lifelike and fluid movement. Although, this comes at a price,

as you'll sometimes try and execute a precise move or action (such as jumping across a building), then die because the

reaction time was delayed as Herbert goes through his range of motions.

Konami and Kalisto were quick to point out that there were major changes made to the sequel. Some of these include light

puzzle solving, a more basic and streamlined fighting engine, a host of new moves for your character, a much

more cinematic, story-driven experience, and more open, explorable environments. While all

this might be true, the game's basic premise (chop up a monster, move on a bit, then chop up another

remains basically the same. Herbert can do

few things that Ignatius and Nadia couldn't, such

as the variety of moves mentioned above when

in the exploration mode, but don't be fooled.

Nightmare Creatures II isn't a very detailed

and objective-oriented game (when

compared to other third-person 3D titles, such

as *Tomb Raider*, *Soul Reaver*, *Dino Crisis*, *Silent Hill*

and *Spyro the Dragon*). At its core, the game still

retains its fighting force-style of gameplay, just

in a more dark, evil and hostile environment.

This in itself isn't a criticism as such, it just

seems that the setting and game engine would

be ripe for more of an action/adventure — as

opposed to a typical beat 'em up. Besides learning

to pull off combos and uncover health and power

ups, the most taxing puzzle will have

you searching for a key that

located in a hidden room behind

bookcases... Let me reiterate that

I'm not saying this is a strike against

the game or even *Kalisto* — I'm sure



this is the type of game they intended to make from the get go, it just could be so much more.

On the positive side, the artwork and graphic engine are probably some of the best that will be seen on the aging 32-bit PS hardware. Kelso has spared no expense in the graphic department, with a bevy of special effects (explosions, fire, rain, lightning, fog, snow, etc.), incredibly detailed animation, high-poly count characters, and some of the best-looking, cinematic cut-scenes I've ever experienced. In addition, they've somehow managed to pull off the most realistic sploshing blood in a PS game to date. With every connecting swing of Herbert's axe, buckets of the stuff go flying around the room, splattering on walls, oozing off environmental objects and collecting in puddles on the floor. This game is definitely not for the squeamish or faint of heart and will surely catch the scrupulous eye of many a mom, and maybe even a senator or two to boot. In addition, the sound effects are to be commended as well. The in-game sounds and background music are perfectly suited to the horror-themed environment, and the cinematic music (including the opening track) is done by the busiest musician in video games — no, not Tommy Torlorico — Rob Zombie.

On the downside (there always are one or two), this game is not without its faults. For starters, the difficulty seems to be a bit uneven. I lost three of my five continues in the first level (which, by the way, is HUGE). It seems to me that a little more time could have been spent balancing the difficulty of your opponents, the location of the health items and the save points. There also seems to be an issue with collision detection. Herbert and his enemies will often get stuck on invisible walls and will automatically "pop up" onto some objects in the environments, such as desks. Also, even with the huge levels and more open environments, the game still feels a bit on the repetitive side after a few hours of play — the main thing that kept me going (besides having to write the cover feature) was wanting to see the next level and cut-scene.

genre: Action/Fighting
published by: Konami/Universal
developed by: Kalisto

origin: France
of CDs: 1
available: Now

SCORE:

Extremes

COMPATIBILITY

PlayStation 2 PlayStation 1 Windows PC



BOTTOM LINE

Even with its small faults and sometimes freaky (in a good way) gameplay, *Kalisto* (Konami/Universal Nightman Creations) is still a very, very cool game. If you normally liked the first one, then you will be completely in heaven with the sequel. There is a decent fighting game, as well as a very spooky and surprisingly scary action game, all rolled up into one sick package. On the other hand, if you're looking for a more complex, exploration-style game, then you might want to stick with the Resident Evil and Tomb Raider — as *Nightman Creations II* is still a little light in that department. With this said, I feel that the game still squeaks into the Gold category with a rating of 90%.

90%



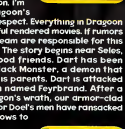
THE LEGEND OF DRAGOON



Ultima and Dragon Warrior on the NES were generally considered "nerd" games; so were most RPGs. It wasn't cool to be seen playing an RPG back in the day. But role-playing games aren't what they used to be. RPGs have become about as common as fighting games. Final Fantasy VII can take credit for propelling the once ignored genre to the big time, mainstream as it were. Almost every major Japanese publisher has given the genre of epic storytelling a go — more so in the last couple of years. And now Sony takes a stab at it with The Legend of Dragoon, a game that's four years and a few hundred people in the making.

This is where I'd normally find something witty to say about how long it took Sony to develop Dragoon. I'm going to forego the silliness because Dragoon's execution is awesome and demands my respect. Everything in Dragoon is done right, from the story to the beautiful rendered movies. If rumors that ex-members from the Xenogears team are responsible for this one are true, I can see why it's so good. The story begins near Seles, home to Dart and Shana, two childhood friends. Dart has been gone for five years in search of the Black Monster, a demon that destroyed Neet, his village, and killed his parents. Dart is attacked near the outskirts of Seles by a dragon named Feyrbrand. After a traveling warrior saves him from the dragon's wrath, our armor-clad hero returns to Seles only to find that Emperor Doel's men have ransacked the village and kidnapped Shana. Dart then vows to save his friend from the Emperor's clutches.

What begins as a simple journey to save a friend turns into an epic adventure. And when I say epic, I mean epic — The Legend of Dragoon spans four discs. Dart meets many people and makes many friends in his trip through the land of Soa. What makes Dragoon so captivating is that you're never given too much throughout the course of the game. You understand why Dart begins his journey, but his journey continues to escalate until the fourth and final chapter. The actual script isn't anything to write home about — to quote Eric, "most of the dialogue is at about an 8th grade level" — yet the game will still keep you glued to the screen for the 40+ hour trip. Also, in contrast to Final Fantasy's neo-mystic universe where magic meets technology,





Dragoon's premise is far more believable with more myth and magic. Another definite plus for frequent RPGers is the way battles occur. Even the likes of Final Fantasy has no rhyme or reason for battle — they just happen on occasion. Instead of running around with no clue when the next battle will start, Dragoon provides visual cues. A small icon above Dart will go from green to yellow then red. When the icon turns red, you know that a battle is about to commence.

When battles do finally take place, it's not just another turn-based fight either. The Addition and Dragoon system breathe some life into an otherwise generic system battle system. Additions are more or less combo attacks. By pressing the X button with the proper timing, you can gain up to seven additional hits. Unlike traditional RPGs, Dragoons can only perform magic spells. A Dragoon is a fighter's alter ego. By collecting Dragon spirits throughout the land, each fighter earns the right to assume the role of that Dragoon. It's a really unique way of earning magic. Speaking of magic, the visual effects are going to blow your mind. Almost every spell and every Dragoon attack fill the screen with pyrotechnics not unlike the 4th of July. Dart's Final Burst and Rose's Astral Drain push the aging PS to the limits. These same spells do slow down the pace of battles and cause them to become a little drawn out, but if you've played any other RPG on the PlayStation it won't be anything new.

Dragoon's most heinous flaw is undoubtedly its linear nature. There's normally only one path to explore at a time. As you complete the tasks given you, more open up. Basically, you can't veer off on the world map. You're either wasting time at your current location or beating the next. This is true from beginning to end, and if you don't like linear games stay away from Dragoon. While I'm at it, boss battles can tip the scales of difficulty and frustration. Faults included, we still get a solid RPG that ups the ante for seasoned veterans like Enix and Square. Unlike other genres, there's variety in the RPG market and that's good. Between

Atlus, Square, Enix, and now Sony's own in-house development team, fans of storytelling will be kept in check. The Legend of Dragoon may be Sony's last real RPG before the publisher switches gears to PS2. It's almost a sure thing that this one will get a sequel on PS2. For a first endeavor, I have to give Sony a lot of credit. The Legend of Dragoon has proven to be a real joy to play. I can't recommend it enough.

BOTTOM LINE

There's no way around it. The Legend of Dragoon is destined to become an instant PlayStation classic. Forget Final Fantasy — The Legend of Dragoon captures the essence of real bygone 16-bits. If you don't give this one a chance, you have no business owning a PlayStation. And if you don't already have a PS, here's a damn good reason to own one.

COMPATIBILITY

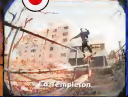


SCORE:



99%

GRIND SESSION



Looking at skateboarding as it is today compared to how it existed when I was younger you can easily see how the focus has changed. Back then staying on the board itself while turning was considered a major achievement while today at every chance skateboarders defy gravity in ways we would have never imagined back then. As always when a genre becomes popular it spawns copycats. Often in the end these frites fail because while they may copy the "look" of the original they don't come close to capturing its feel. Sony and Shaba Studios have attempted to change that situation with Grind Session. For the most part they've succeeded. Grind Session includes a multitude of game modes, lots of hidden items, and a bumpin' soundtrack to boot.

Grind Session features 6 professional skaters including Ed Templeton and Daewon Song. Each features their own custom moveset and abilities ranked in a variety of stats including Vertical Skill, Street Skill and Balance. Additionally each skater brings with them their own sponsored boards and bio information. If no one available suits your fancy, create your own skater. You can choose from one of the 4 custom skaters: two male, two female. Once you've selected your on-screen persona you are presented with a list of moves to select from. Regardless of how you customize your own skater or if you choose a professional, each skater's move list is available via the pause menu during actual gameplay.

Grind Session features a variety of single and multi-player modes. If you're a beginning shredder like me however, you're probably going to want to check out the Training mode first. Here you'll be guided through a variety of basic ground tricks, rails, air, jump, etc. it also has the additional bonus of unlocking additional boards for use in the other modes.

Get as many of your clan together as you can, Grind Session supports up to 16 players via turn-based play. Multi-player modes include a straight Competition mode, Tech Challenge (complete you best trick in 10 seconds) and C.H.U.M.P., the Grind Session version of HORSE (match each other's tricks to advance).

Tournament mode is the main one-player mode of Grind Session. In this mode you'll compete in each locale to earn "Respect". Respect points are earned in a variety of ways: scoring Trick points; scoring Pro points (score above maximum trick points for that level to earn pro points); Vandal Points (smashing items, collecting radios, chasing away birds); and Technical Points. Technical Points tie into a new feature to skating games brought forth in Grind Session: the Skater's Eye.





The Skater's Eye allows you to look around the locale you're currently in for Technical Lines. These lines trace a path over certain obstacles. So for instance one technical line may be a rail followed by a jump through a class cabinet to continue to rail on the other side. Complete the sequence for Technical Points. In addition, as you continue to perform successful trick combos you'll charge your Power Meter. Maxing this meter "possesses" you. You'll gain a faster spin rate and better balance which ties into the balance meter that appears when you rail. You can

also gain "keys" to access various rooms of the additional Dream House level. Locales are unlocked in Career mode by gaining a fixed number of Respect Points in the preceding level (as stated on the menu). You can then access these levels in Open Skate mode. A very nice thing about the Tournament mode is the variety of competitions. In one level you'll find yourself with a certain amount of time to gain as much Respect as possible. Other levels will give you one chance to pull off your best trick, or score a certain amount of points to advance. Finally the last one-player mode is an Endurance mode where you'll have a fixed amount of time to accomplish tricks to advance to the next level.

Enough with the WHO and WHAT; you want to know WHERE you'll be skating, right? Grind Session features eight levels in a variety of international locales from Da Banks in New York City to the subways of San Francisco. From the Detroit drainage system to the high-rise rooftops and parking garages of Atlanta.

If that was simply it we'd be looking at a solid game. Grind Session however has a number of unlockable goodies. Maxing out in Respect points on a level gives you a Photo Shoot opportunity. This is a specific requirement (score a certain amount of points, etc.) that if you are successful in completing unlocks hidden photos, and other additional items. Catch enough air, smash through the right portion of a course and you'll find yourself in a hidden area with even more points available.

Graphically Grind Session does a good job of getting you in the action. Locales are varied with the occasional background animation (passing vehicle, etc.). Each area features a variety of items for you to skate on, through, above, and under. Skater animation is solid throughout, though perhaps not quite at the level of Tony Hawk. In terms of control Sony has copied Tony Hawk's

control scheme exactly. Considering how solid that control scheme is, that's not exactly a bad thing. Controls are tight and responsible yet the control system seems to be a bit forgiving, as evidenced by my missing a jump on the way down and landing flat on the ground and continuing to skate with no problem.

Rounding out the package is a soundtrack with a very nice mix of artists including Dr. Octagon, GZA (of Wu-Tang fame), KRS-One and Sonic Youth.

Grind Session is a solid attempt at capturing the Tony Hawk crowd. Its gameplay features a different focus which elevates it above a simple "one too" title. With its multitude of gameplay options and one of the best licensed music soundtracks I've heard recently it's well worth a look by skateboarding fans.

COMPATIBILITY



GEKIDO



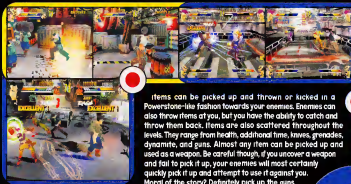
Streets of Rage, Double Dragon and Final Fight — one of these three titles probably hooked you at some point. Fast forwarding to today, however, you'll find that this sub-gunre is virtually dead. Edos' Fighting Force attempted to recapture the old glory, but it's generally considered to have failed miserably. Enter Interplay and Gekido. With its comic book-like inspired characters, multi-path missions, hordes of enemies and generally kick "ahem" butt style of gameplay, you'll be coming back for more... and more... and more...

Gekido has a storyline... but who really needs an excuse to go kick some tail? Evil has taken over a town, and a female friend of yours has turned up missing in the process. It's up to you to try to make things right. There's a bit more to the story but, in a nutshell, that's it. Like I said... kick butt time.

Gekido starts you out with four available characters and two game modes. As with most fighters you can pick the character that suits your fighting style. Want to quickly pummel your enemies? Michelle is for you. How about your average rough and rugged "street fighter" type? Travis at your service. Martial Arts your thing? Tetsuo awaits your call. And, finally, say finesse isn't your strong point. You basically just want to plow through everything in your path — Ushi is ready.

When it comes time to actually administer the punishment you'll find Gekido's fighting system more than lives up to the task. Your character has a light and heavy punch as well as a kick. You can also jump and crouch over and under enemy attacks. Hold down the "lock-on" button and besides a neat letter-box-like screen effect that appears, your character will focus and lock onto one enemy. While locked on, your character's movements will circle and all attacks will be directed towards that enemy. The fighting system is a learning system. Random kicks and punches are not going to cut it here. As you defeat enemies you'll gain access to specific button combinations, which will briefly flash on the screen. As you gain these combinations you'll need to use them against your enemies. Successfully using these combinations gives you access to additional and more complex, damaging and impressive-looking combinations. Finally, you can always resort to tossing your enemies around. Special attacks? Gekido has two separate special attack systems. A rage attack that can be charged up to three levels which range from a charged up automatic combo to a level three attack that will surround your character in a nimbus of light making you invulnerable and incredibly powerful for a limited amount of time. Secondly, an additional meter allows you to unleash a blast that will flatten every enemy on the screen. These special powers can be used separately or in combination for an ultra-deadly attack. Along the way, you'll find various crates, trays, wheels and barrels. These





Items can be picked up and thrown or kicked in a Powerstone-like fashion towards your enemies. Enemies can also throw items at you, but you have the ability to catch and throw them back. Items are also scattered throughout the levels. They range from health, additional time, knives, grenades, dynamite, and guns. Almost any item can be picked up and used as a weapon. Be careful though, if you uncover a weapon and fail to pick it up, your enemies will most certainly quickly pick it up and attempt to use it against you. Moral of the story? Definitely pick up the guns.

Gameplay is fast and furious. Enemies attack in waves ranging from simple soldiers, to martial arts women, grenade-throwing men and large, white-suited, machine gun-toting brutes. Bosses are also quite varied, running the gamut of pistol-wielding muscle men to Psycho Mantis-like, screen warping, lightning-welding, black-clothed men (is that enough descriptive adjectives for you?).

Character, enemy and boss designs have a definite comic book/anime slant. With a variety of levels spread through the city — from deserted back alleys, main streets, water-filled subways to hi-rise office buildings — graphically everything is tightly put together and wrapped in a nice cover of incredible lighting effects. Your characters and the enemies shout out a variety of attacks and special attacks but, besides that (and the death sounds of your foes), there is very little else in the voice department. In general, there is a wide range of sounds, from the crunches and thuds of connecting attacks to various weapons usages and explosions. Music ranges from rock to techno (with a couple of Fatboy Slim remixes thrown in for good measure), generally sitting comfortably in the background and always keeping you "in the mood" for a good butt stomper.

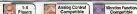
All of this adds up to a great two-player package. But, Gremlin Interactive didn't stop there. The game's Arena mode features up to four players battling it out in a small arena in a VERY Powerstone-like fashion. As in the main mode, you'll find a variety of items that can be used as weapons on each level. But that STILL isn't all! Infusing Gekido with tons of replay value, you'll have to finish the title with all four of the original characters to face the games TRUE boss and see the best ending. Each character's battle isn't exactly the same, however. Characters start at different locations and, in certain levels, have the option to take different paths.

Finally, Gremlin has hidden a host of goodies to bring you back for more. How about ending up with at least double the number of characters initially available? How about at least doubling the number of game modes available? That's all the good, so what's the bad you say? Occasionally you'll see some slowdown. Some of the large explosions tend to block your view and sometimes the intelligent camera (which generally does a good time of keeping the action viewable) gets itself into a bit of trouble. At this point these are minor nitpicks. When all is said and done, Gekido is literally brimming with damn fine old-fashioned, old-school fighting goodness... it's about time.

BOTTOM LINE

Gekido is truly the heir successor the action fighting genre. Multiple game modes, tons of replayability and options galore take this title in some respects above the classics it pays homage to. Play by yourself or get some friends... but definitely play this game.

COMPATIBILITY



97%

COVERT OPS

NUCLEAR DAWN



In CO:ND, you're a lone U.N. soldier on board the French ambassador's train which has just been hijacked by terrorists on its way from St. Petersburg to Paris. The game can best be described as "Resident Evil on the Orient Express" — although there is gunplay, the emphasis is on searching for items and solving puzzles.

The environments consist of polygons rather than pre-rendered backgrounds, but I have no idea why. For one thing, it makes the game look rough around the edges. It is hard to tell what can be picked up and what is just a pattern on the floor, although the most important items will "gleam." The benefit of using polygons in the first place is to allow for the camera to zoom and move around, yet here the camera is locked down in the corners of the train's cars. It's like watching yourself in those large circular convenience store mirrors. The camera angles create a claustrophobic feeling — a feeling augmented by the periodic shaking of the train and engine noises.

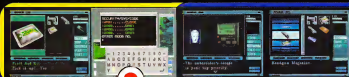
An interesting feature is the ability to control the camera independently of your character, using it to peer through windows and around corners. You'll need to use this feature often. Not only must you move the camera to help locate items which are out of sight, but you must keep an eye out for enemies. The majority of them also appear out of sight, firing at you from off screen. Let's say you're caught unaware, a "warning" meter is shown to let you know when you are under attack, and your character changes his stance to a firing position (although you still have to move the targeting cursor to find its mark). The cursor changes color depending upon how far away the enemy is. The closer the better, but the difficulty setting also determines how many slugs the bad guys can take. Unfortunately, on the normal difficulty, it takes 3 or 4 shots even at close range! When your gun is empty, you can switch to your fists as a last resort. Close quarters combat is more difficult however, even with a gun, since you'll have to be lined up very precisely.

The file, map, and storage system will be familiar to fans of Capcom's survival horror series, although save/storage points seem more unevenly spaced. The game doesn't tell you when an item is no longer needed, so you'll end up carrying a lot of worthless junk — making it impossible to pick up the more important items you come across later unless you make a long trip back to the storage box.

As in Resident Evil, there are a lot of documents to be found. Some are superfluous, some provide hints on solving a puzzle, and others will give information to advance the storyline. CO:ND offers seven different endings and a bonus mode, depending upon your decisions and success or failure, although storyline branch points are never clearly delineated as such.

The espionage theme is a refreshing change from all of the "survival





horror" games and their zombie protagonists. Considering the storyline – you're alone on a train commandeered by terrorists – there was a lot of potential to create a feeling of tension. Unfortunately, due to the simplistic puzzles, dumb enemies, and frequent running from car to car, the atmosphere becomes more like that of an Amtrak sightseeing trip. A couple of hours into the game, you might be wondering "Are we there yet?" CO:ND is way too easy on the "rookie" level, where enemies are slow to react, but difficult on the "normal" level because ammo is scarce and it takes more shots for a kill.

The only reason that stealth is ever needed is to conserve ammo. Otherwise, you can generally take out the enemies "Rambo-style" without fear of jeopardizing the hostages. What is the point of taking hostages then? You'll need to suspend your disbelief to accept the fact that the terrorists, who were intelligent enough to take over a NATO train, are too stupid to secure it properly. Although entering an incorrect code or using the wrong card key might set off an alarm, it is easy to avoid doing so. If you are ever spotted, the terrorists will follow you from room to room, but not from car to car. Most of the time you can squat down to shoot them without getting hit yourself.

It isn't until you near the end of the first disk that you'll finally face an enemy who is a worthy opponent. The difficulty ramps up so suddenly with these "mini-bosses" that it catches you off guard. As for the puzzles, most are of the "locked door" variety. The required card key can be found nearby or will be given to you as soon as you meet up with an NPC. The problem is that you'll be sent back and forth repeatedly between the cars you've already visited, which definitely feels like an artificial way to lengthen the game.

There are a couple of arcade action sequences involving shooting down helicopters and matching the speed of adjacent trains. These bits, as well as the time spent on top of the train jumping from car to car, are a nice diversion. However, the outdoor shootouts look and play poorly in comparison to *Spyton Filter* and other similar titles. The game's engine is definitely better suited to exploration than action.



There is no analog support, the voice track is not quite in sync with the cinema scenes, and many of the voice actors are annoying. There is also some translation which, while not grammatically incorrect, is unintentionally humorous. After encountering a dead body in a freezer, you'll note the hanging meat nearby by thinking "Leg of lamb... yum!" Who are you? Homer Simpson? When you come across another dead guy, you'll think "He needed a doctor." Well, duh! There are also "loading" screens every time you move between cars, which is quite often. These are minor annoyances, however. Overall, I found the game enjoyable to play through, but in a limited sort of way. CO:ND just doesn't have the intensity of a *Resident Evil* or *Dino Crisis*, nor are the puzzles as clever or interesting, and its actions sequences just can't compare to true espionage games such as *Metal Gear Solid*.

BOTTOM LINE

The dramatic storyline can't overcome the fact that the puzzles are simplistic and you'll spend too much time running back and forth between empty cars. It's a good game, but as a thriller it is definitely in need of more thrills.

COMPATIBILITY



GRUDGE
WARRIORS

GENRE: Action/Shooter
 PUBLISHED BY: Take-2
 DEVELOPED BY: Tempest
 ORIGIN: UK
 # OF CD'S: 1
 AVAILABLE: NOW!



As one of Take 2's new \$9.99 games, I didn't expect Grudge Warriors to be a mind-blowing experience (and I wasn't proved wrong), yet without lofty expectations the game managed to impress me more than I thought it would.

Despite the title, Grudge Warriors is not a fighting game. It's a vehicle combat game that reminded me of Assault Rigs and the original Twisted Metal, two games from the PlayStation's early years, with a touch of the more recent Vigilante 6 (sans the funky soundtrack) and Tiny Tank (sans the smart dick comments).

The object of the game is pretty simple, which is why Grudge Warriors succeeds as a no-frills action game. As a member of one of eleven different vehicle gangs, you're trying to prove your worth by staging solo assaults on rival gangs' island headquarters. In each location, your goal is to destroy all of the power generators while taking out enemy vehicles and other defenses. There is also a plot involving prototype technology being developed by each gang for the Crime Lord, an entity who oversees the gangs (and whom you will eventually confront).

Tokens are hidden or scattered throughout each island and can be collected to earn extra weapons or vehicle upgrades. Each gang has a different specialty and special weapon, and their vehicles control differently (some are faster, some have more traction, etc.). Power exchange units can be located on each island to help refill your depleted weapons, although they will not restore your health. In fact, I didn't find any health power-ups at all—when your health runs out, the game is over. Fortunately, you have shields which can be replenished, in addition, falls from great distances and plunges into the water cannot destroy your vehicle. Only enemy weapons cause damage.

Weapons are selected with the L buttons and fired with the R buttons, while the X button handles acceleration. Although the game automatically targets nearby enemies, you can use the O button in conjunction with the direction keys to move your turrets manually. I prefer using the analog sticks or direction buttons to accelerate in games such as this, and thankfully G4 allows control to be configured to the players' liking. There are not too many controls to memorize in any event, so you should get a handle on control in no time.

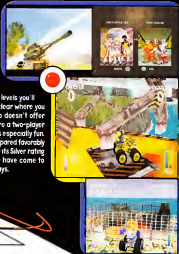
Frankly, the graphics look dated. While the game is colorful, with some nice good lighting effects, the textures are pretty bland. There is also some clipping, the frame rate drops as the action heats up, and the camera can be quite disorienting at times. Just back into a corner inside a cramped tunnel and you'll see what I mean. Fortunately, the fast-paced gameplay makes up for it.

There aren't any puzzles per se, but locating the generators sometimes takes a bit of thought. For example, on an early level, you'll encounter a building with an entrance protected by a force field. Next to the building are two pools of water which you cannot enter (water is the only "off limits" surface). On the sides of the building, however, are signs that look like thermometers. On a hunch, you fire your lasers into the water. The pools start to bubble with the increase in temperature, which in turn unlocks the force field. Logical? Not really, but it does add a level of difficulty beyond the simple "drive and shoot" concept.

My main complaint is that, although you are shown an image of your targets before each mission, on some levels you'll spend a lot of time searching for them. It isn't always clear where you can go and what you can interact with. The game also doesn't offer anything new or innovative, although it does feature a two-player battle mode in six different settings which is especially fun. In 1996, Grudge Warriors would have compared favorably to the better games of the time—it's Silver rating reflects the fact that we have come to expect more nowadays.

As with grocery store brand sodas, you know you won't be getting the "best," but you are willing to settle for less due to the cheaper price. Grudge Warriors isn't a fabulous game, yet it plays well enough to be quite enjoyable, and for \$9.99, you won't find a better video game bargain.

COMPATIBILITY



81%

GENRE: Action/Combat
PUBLISHED BY: Take-2
DEVELOPED BY: Runecraft
ORIGIN: UK
OF CD'S: 1
AVAILABLE: NOW

REVIEWED BY:
MARK ANDROVICH

EXrated

SPEC OPS STEALTH PATROL



Following Sony's recent decision to lower its licensing fees, Take 2 Interactive announced a lineup of brand new games priced at \$9.99 each. It is unlikely that you'll see any Platinum or Gold-level titles in the group — after all, if a company has a fabulous property that it can sell at \$39.99, it would be stupid not to do so. Assuming that most of these games will be only average in quality, the question becomes whether or not the bargain price will elevate an otherwise mediocre game into a recommended purchase. With Spec Ops, I might just have to say yes.

Right away, you'll notice some pop-up, clipping, and fogging effects. Still, to be fair, the graphics are an improvement over the Army Men series. Unlike 3DO's franchise, however, Spec Ops is intended to be more realistic and is devoid of humor. The game allows you to choose two Rangers from a squad of specialists to be assigned various missions. The soldiers show signs of fatigue depending on how many missions they've been involved with, forcing you not to overuse your favorites. You'll also have to decide which weaponry to pack according to your character's firearms expertise.

Like many PC ports, Spec Ops crams a lot of actions into the limited number of buttons on the PlayStation controller. Your Ranger can crouch, crawl, roll, direct a companion, set timed explosives, fire weapons, throw grenades, and use items such as binoculars and night vision goggles. Some weapons feature a scope, which causes problems because you activate it with the same button that switches between the third-person and first-person perspectives. It isn't easy to select equipment either, especially since you remain under fire while doing so. An overhead map can be called up, but it is generally worthless since it shows only the area directly around you.

If the \$9.99 price is intended to attract an audience of casual gamers, Take 2 might need to adjust the difficulty. First of all, the enemies are hard to see in the distance and will usually spot you first. You'll have to rely almost completely upon your targeting cursor to show you where they are. Of course, by the time you line them up in your sights, you've already been hit a few times yourself. There is no margin for error, either, as it takes only three or four hits to kill your Ranger. In addition, there is little or no cover to be found in many of the landscapes. You can't run away, nor can you fire weapons while running or rolling.

Finally, the manner in which you obtain most ammo and health power-ups is flawed. These items are left behind by enemies when killed, but you have only seconds to reach them. If you are surrounded the items dropped by the first enemy will have disappeared by the time you kill the last one. To make matters worse, you can only carry a single med pack. If you grab one off of the ground when you already have one in your inventory, it goes nowhere.

Keeping track of both Rangers isn't easy. If you decide to switch back and forth between them, there is a slight "loading" pause. Thankfully, you are able to give voice commands such as "follow me," or "stay here" (where's Abe when you need him?), but the computer doesn't respond as well to developing threats as a second human player can. All I can figure is that the designers want to discourage "lone" Rangers in favor of the two-player cooperative mode.

If your first two Rangers are killed, you'll choose two replacements. Unfortunately, even if your first attempt failed near the final objective, your new men will have to start the mission over from the very beginning. Lose these replacements and the game will end (showing a picture of a military cemetery, in case you aren't already feeling guilty enough). The game also ends if the level timer runs out, creating a no-win situation. If you are slow and deliberate, avoiding death, you can still fail because you took too long. Yet if you run through a mission quick enough to beat the clock, you are more likely to be gunned down.



BOTTOM LINE

Knowing that you get what you pay for, I didn't expect much from Spec Ops. It looks dated and has a few flaws, which is why it receives only an average rating. However, considering the retail price of \$9.99, I would recommend it to action or military combat fans as a cheap diversion.

COMPATIBILITY

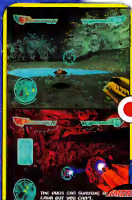
PS2
 PC
 PlayStation
 Atari/Commodore
 Microsoft Windows

SCORE:
 77%

77%

GENRE: FPS
 PUBLISHED BY: Acclaim
 DEVELOPED BY: Acclaim London
 ORIGIN: UK
 # OF CD'S: 1
 AVAILABLE: NOW!

ARMORINES



SCORE:

TIN

X

43%

43%

43%

43%

43%

43%

43%

43%

43%

43%

43%

43%

43%

There you have it: *Armorines* is a senseless game that should be embarrassed to share the same category with *Medal of Honor* and the upcoming *Allies Resurrection*. Avoid it at all costs (even 20 bucks) and save your money for *AR* or the upcoming *Medal of Honor: Underground* — you'll be glad that you did.

COMPATIBILITY



Why, oh why would anyone ever consider releasing a game like this? Having just returned from E3, I have seen evidence that Acclaim has their act together on PS2 and that the problems that they have had on PlayStation (N64 sales, in a complete contradiction to what has happened to almost every other third party publisher in the 32-bit era, have accounted for most of Acclaim's business over the past four years) are evaporating as we move toward the next generation. Why, then, do they feel that they need to remind us of their recent past?

I defy anybody to give one rational reason for releasing *Armorines* onto the unsuspecting gaming public. This first-person shooter (FPS) is so slow, boring and nasty looking that it sets PS software development back five years. Because of the game's frame rate issues, the control is also terrible. Then, there is the repetitive nature of the gameplay: You shoot bugs... then, you shoot some more bugs... then, just when it looks like things will never get any better, they don't... you're still shooting bugs. Of course, some bugs disappear, others re-appear and any time there is a little action on the screen, it seems like the whole system shuts down... nasty. Anybody remember the movie *Starship Troopers* — possibly the biggest pile of garbage shoveled into movie theaters in the past decade? It's *Shakespeare* when compared to the digital refuse that is *Armorines*.

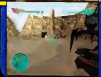
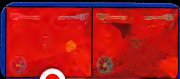
The story: These alien bugs come to earth and we believe that their intentions are honorable. Because of this, there is a moratorium on the production of "Black Flag" (OK... I added that last part). The bugs, imagine my shock, are seeking to make human beings extinct! "Nobody understood the motives of their unholy agenda," in order to save mankind, the *Armorines* are called in — a fighting force strong enough to "survive the terrifying might of a nuclear conflict."

"They stand between us and the darkness."

"They are our last hope for survival."

Uh, yeah. Given the 'quality' of this narrative, I cannot believe that this project was ever given the green light, or that it wasn't squashed once Acclaim saw the thing up and running. There are hundreds of PlayStation games available in the states, how in the world does *Armorines* have a chance to do anything but sell for 10 bucks within three weeks of its release? Of course, Acclaim is not solely to blame for this disaster. What ever happened to the Sony third party approval process? At this point in the PlayStation's life-cycle, I guess it's "rip it and ship it". There is no way that this game should ever have been released... it is the PlayStation equivalent of "Superman" on the N64.

Oh and, before I forget, there is the issue of CD load times. The game loads constantly. These constant breaks in the game become an issue immediately, when the only thing you need to do at the beginning of the game is kill one bug and run up a straight path to a working elevator. It's a total of 10 seconds worth of gameplay, followed by 20 seconds worth of loading. The game is so butt-ugly that they should have been able to load the entire game into VRAM! Dreadful, absolutely dreadful.



GENRE: Action/Shooter
PUBLISHED BY: Infogrames
DEVELOPED BY: Rage
ORIGIN: UK
OF CD'S: 1
AVAILABLE: NOW!

REVIEWED BY:
MARK ANDROVICH

EXrated

EXPENDABLE



By all indications, this game shouldn't have impressed me. It came to us as a boxed copy without fanfare, and it had already arrived in the stores last fall as a Dreamcast port of a PC game. Not to mention the fact that it's got a title that just begs to be used negatively in the review ("Like the name says, this game really is nonessential."). That's a lot to overcome!

The story, if you need to know it, involves "Expendables" — soldiers grown for the express purpose of destroying an alien race, named the Charva. These aliens are using terraformed planets and moons as stepping stones to reach Earth, circa 2463. You've got to stop them with all the firepower you can muster. Weapons such as missiles, rockets, mines, and grenades can be picked up as you go through the 20 levels. There are hostages who can be rescued for extra points and energy, as well as secret areas and bonus levels to be discovered. I was pleasantly surprised to find that Expendable plays much like a classic arcade game — not very deep, but fun nevertheless.

To be sure, the game has its share of problems. First and foremost is the difficult control scheme. Basically, your player controls like a tank. Pushing left or right on the direction buttons rotates him in place; pushing up and down causes him to move forwards and backwards, respectively. As a result, in order to fire upon enemies located diagonally from your position, you've got to stop, turn in place, move forward, and continuously correct your movement. Fortunately, the game does allow for strafing, and sometimes it is preferable to spin around in place to fire at enemies. Still, movement is more difficult to get used to than it needs to be and the analog stick only makes things worse. In the two-player game, if you find yourself off the screen from your buddy, good luck getting back since you have no idea which way you are facing.

The control difficulties wouldn't be as much of a problem if it weren't for the fact that your on-screen characters are roughly the size of potato bugs. If you stopped firing and stared at your Expendable, you would be hard-pressed to guess which direction he was facing. While it is true that you don't actually ever need to stop firing, the small size of the characters coupled with the awkward controls can lead to some cheap deaths from moving where you did not intend.

Expendable doesn't have any unique elements and many of the levels look quite similar. After the opening cinema, the game settles down as a run-of-the-mill post-apocalyptic shooter, and the non-stop gunfire wears thin after awhile. Still, the repetitiveness of the gameplay is more a function of the genre than of this particular title. After all, if you wanted to exercise your mind, you wouldn't be playing a game like this, now would you?

The game would have benefited from a target lock, especially for aerial enemies who are quite difficult to hit even when it looks like you are aiming directly at them. A jump or climb button might have added a little depth, but as the game is designed there is no need for it — you can either shoot your way through an obstacle, or you go around it. The small size of the characters makes it difficult to differentiate between enemies and hostages, let alone between power ups. Aside from grenades, you can only carry three different types of weapons at once. The manual suggests that you switch to your least desirable weapon before grabbing a fourth one, as your selected weapon will then be discarded. Who are they kidding? There is so much going on that you

don't have time to think about it, not to mention the fact that weapons disappear if they are not grabbed within a certain period of time anyway. If nothing makes Expendable stand out as a "must buy," nothing makes it unpleasant either. The graphics look nice, with lots of explosions, weapons fire, particles, debris, and lighting effects. Despite the constant action, there is negligible slowdown, even in the two-player contest. Expendable allows for both two-player cooperative play as well as arena-based "deathmatches." Quite simply, it is fun to play.

BOTTOM LINE

Like the name says, Expendable is superfluous (I couldn't resist). There's nothing new here to distinguish it, so if your game library already contains enough shooters you might want to pass. However, despite a few flaws, the game is fast-paced and enjoyable... especially with a friend.

COMPATIBILITY

- For 8 Players
- Using Central Expansion
- Maximum Function
- Compatible



SCORE:



84%

| | |
|---------------|----------|
| GENRE: | RPG |
| PUBLISHED BY: | Sony |
| DEVELOPED BY: | Contrail |
| ORIGIN: | Japan |
| # OF CO'S: | 2 |
| AVAILABLE: | NOW! |

WILD ARMS II



Character
Use this mission to go back into the ruins where the heritage is held.



Find the artifact.
It's important to carry out your mission. Just don't let it escape.



Score
92% 92% 92%



SCORE:



92%

As sequels go, Wild Arms 2 is fairly tame. For the most part the improvements are modest but generally well thought out. While featuring some additional sidequests and hidden areas, like most RPGs, Wild Arms 2 doesn't feature a lot of replayability. Still, as RPGs go, it's a pretty interesting trip.

COMPATIBILITY



Wild Arms was one of the early RPGs released on the PlayStation. While enjoyable it had the unfortunate luck to be released entirely too close to Square's epic final Fantasy VII. Though probably overlooked by many, Wild Arms apparently was popular enough to spawn a sequel.

The sequel returns us to Filgaia and much has changed since our last visit. ARMs no longer refers to ancient magical relics but to a special group that fight for the combat of Filgaia with plans for world domination. Our hero (another spiky-haired over-sized sword carrying self-doubting soul: what is there an unspoken rule about this?) joins together with other adventurers to stop this world threat.

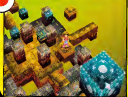
Similar to its predecessor, Wild Arms 2 starts out by giving you the choice to pick an individual character. Unlike most RPGs you'll need to accomplish a bit with each individual team member before they meet up for the grand adventure. In another nod to the original title each character has several special "tools" that you can collect along the way. You'll use these tools in a Zelda-like fashion to solve puzzles. The main character, for instance, starts off with a throwing knife that you can use to reach out of reach switches. Brod starts off with powerful kicking boots capable of kicking away and destroying objects, and finally Lika starts off with a fire wand that can set fire to obstacles, light torches and melt items.

The combat system from the first title remains relatively untouched. Three characters can be in your party at one time. Though basic combat is turn-based, each successful attack or hit to your character gives you additional Force points. These points can be used to access additional abilities such as enhanced attacks, spell casting, and the ability to "summon" FF-like Guardian creatures. One new side addition is the Personal Skills ability. As your characters gain levels you receive Personal Skill points that can be used towards additional abilities at shops around the world - from enhancing your chances at counterattacking, to enhanced resistance against poison. Different Personal Skills allow you to custom tailor each character to your individual tastes.

The graphics engine is quite the mix: characters are sprites while the overworld map and towns are completely polygonal. The combat engine renders characters and monsters completely polygonal. In what gets my vote as one of the worst new "systems" to be added to an RPG, Wild Arms II was given the Search System. When walking on the world map you don't see the towns you are going to. Once within the vicinity of where the general directions brought you, you activate a radar-like homing circle of energy. If there is a town within the radius of the system it will come into view. Additionally you can also find money and other items on the world map and in dungeons in this fashion. This would be similar to real life driving on a highway and not being able to see the town you were driving past. Occasionally the directions you are given are so incredibly vague that you'll spend more time (read frustration) attempting to locate the next town. Still the graphics on the world map and battle engine are a nice improvement over the original, with nice lighting effects for spell and guardian "summons".

Wild Arms II disappoints in the sound department. While it features a very nice musical score, you'll find no voices during battles and fairly light "attack" sounds as well. Lacking voices is fairly common in RPGs, but for some reason Wild Arms II battles simply seem more quiet than most others.

The storyline gets off to a bit of a slow start as well and the boss difficulty tends to be a bit uneven. Once things picks up, however, it features enough plots, twists and self-doubt to keep most RPG fans interested.



GENRE: RPG
 PUBLISHED BY: Atlus
 DEVELOPED BY: Nippon Ichi
 ORIGIN: Japan
 # OF CO'S: 2
 AVAILABLE: NOW!

REVIEWED BY:
GARY STRASSBURG

EXrated

RHAPSODY

A MUSICAL ADVENTURE



As an open-minded gaming nut who enjoys almost every genre, I love a good role-play adventure as much as the next guy (Well, except for Mark E. Ed.).

However, when recently given the task of reviewing *Rhapsody: A Musical Adventure*, even an "Uber Gamer" like me had to stifle a psychic groan. Don't get me wrong — I'm definitely not one to pre-judge a title before I've played it, but this one seemed to have "grrr" written all over it. Released in Japan as "Puppet Princess," the game includes fully orchestrated musical interludes and even comes with a bonus soundtrack CD, featuring songs like "Puppet Princess Theme," "Little Love," "Lady's Barrette" and "Mother's Lullaby." "What have I gotten myself into?" I wondered.

Being ever the professional, I simply bit the bullet and popped the game into my PlayStation, determined to gut it out and give the title a fair shake. So, you can imagine my sheer surprise and mock horror when I actually found myself becoming immersed in this quirky and entertaining game! The gods of machismo would surely be ashamed.

Rhapsody definitely has a lot to offer RPG fans, including sharp, colorful graphics, adorable anime-style characters, a simple control scheme, and a charming storyline that made it embarrassingly hard to tear myself away. The 2D sprite characters are beautifully drawn and animated, and the lush, pre-rendered backgrounds are awash in color and detail, featuring a 3/4 overhead perspective. The game has a watercolored pastel look that is extremely easy on the eyes, and the moving music is woven into the adventure in a very touching, upbeat way. You even have the option of hearing the periodic song interludes in English or the original Japanese, and the lyrics are conveniently displayed at the bottom of the screen.

Players are cast in the role of Cornet, a cute young peasant girl who plays the horn and dreams about meeting a prince someday. Her special gift is the ability to communicate with and befriend puppets, many of whom end up joining Cornet in the course of her adventure. One day, while doing a favor for her grandfather, Cornet and her faithful puppet sidekick Kururu are attacked by an evil witch and her pet dragon in the Wonder Woods. Fortunately, the dashing Prince Ferdinand comes to their rescue, setting off a series of events that keep you wondering whether Cornet and Prince Ferdinand are destined to live happily ever after.

Having played countless RPGs where the fate of the world is always in your hands, the lighthearted romantic humor of *Rhapsody* was very refreshing — even for a hardcore gamer like me. The game comes across like a colorful, relaxing lullaby, but its simple gameplay and relative lack of depth may put some challenge-starved players to sleep. Although there are three difficulty settings to choose from, survival is never really an issue, even when set on the hardest skill level. The cute-looking monsters are hardly threatening, making the game perfect for younger gamers, and learning the turn-based combat is an absolute breeze with the user-friendly interface. Cornet can fight with her horn, use it to power up her puppet allies, direct them to attack her foes (or have them do it automatically), and more. Most of the time, you simply press the X button to execute commands, and the majority of fights last less than two minutes.

The remainder of the gameplay is based on the traditional exploration and character interaction that RPG fans enjoy, and there's nothing to do during the musical interludes but sit back and listen as things unfold on screen. In other words, if you're looking for an epic struggle for survival — or even a fairly decent challenge — *Rhapsody* isn't the right ticket for you. On the other hand, if you just want to have some harmless fun and forget your worries for a little while, this stress-free gem is an enjoyable diversion for younger gamers...and yes, even diehard adult players like me!

As a hardcore gamer, I'm almost surprised to admit that I like such a cute and simple RPG. While offering little challenge for most players (hence its silver rating), *Rhapsody* is still a remarkably charming and addictive game, with bright, colorful graphics, endearing characters, and easy controls. Now if you'll excuse me, I need to go play some *Quake*!

COMPATIBILITY



SCORE:



85%

ARENA FOOTBALL UNLEASHED



Pop quiz: How do you improve on NFL Blitz 2000? If you answered A.) More over-the-top tackles, B.) More taunts, C.) More after-the-play-action sounds, or D.) All of the above, then you would be on the right path. In pursuit of "more," Midway ended up in the Arena Football League. Who better to give Midway a four there than QB star Kurt Warner, holder of more than just a few Arena passing records? Hence Midway's Kurt Warner-licensed Arena Football title.

Arena Football Unleashed is indoors on fields no larger than the size of a hockey rink (50 yards long, 85 feet wide, to be exact). The Arena football field is surrounded by a small wall, and each end zone has goal posts with a narrow section for field goals with nets on the outside. Because of the walls and nets, there are no out of bounds situations — balls that bounce off the nets are considered "live." Players can be, and often are, slammed into those walls. Sounds to me like the perfect setting for Midway's style of football, so why doesn't the game rate any higher?

For starters, Arena Football Unleashed is pretty light on game modes. Tournament, Arcade and Season mode pretty much round out the list. Although, within each mode you'll be able to tailor various options — including difficulty, amount of time to select plays, # of plays necessary for 1st downs, etc.

Fans of the Blitz series will find themselves right at home here. In a fairly cheap move, you'll find that just about everything — from the interface for selecting plays, down to the actual control system — has been lifted almost directly from Blitz.

All 16 of the league's teams are available, rated in a variety of stats which include offense, defense, and special teams. Though Arena Football actually features fewer players on screen than NFL Blitz 2000, the players don't seem to look as good. What they lack in looks, however, they certainly make up for in animation. There are a huge variety of tackles, slams, chokes, kicks, flips, eye pokes, and groin kicks. You name it, you'll probably find it here! Not only will you see each and every tackle, but you'll hear all of the bone-jarring action quite clearly. A variety of taunts, grunts, groans and the sound of football gear getting crunched await you. As if watching your favorite wide receiver getting choked, repeatedly punched in the head, then slammed isn't enough, you'll also suffer the humiliation of having the announcer quote gleefully comment on your predicament (just like Blitz).

Arena's available plays, again, are quite similar to the ones found in Blitz — with some plays coming over directly. If that's not enough, like Blitz, you'll have access to a Play Editor where you can modify existing plays (change formations, pass routes, defensive assignments) or create your own. Got a perfect play in your head that no one can beat? Time to prove it. You can create offensive and defensive plays in any of the available formations and save them to your memory card. Unfortunately, it seems that, as with NFL Blitz, you only have access to your plays if you assign them as audibles (of which there are only three).

Almost all of Midway's sports titles seem to feature a similar style of CPU AI. That is, CPU assistance that can be turned on and off but, more importantly, AI that seems to go from acceptable to over the top if you are in the lead as the game winds down. In this case, that means more dropped passes for you, and more interceptions for the computer among other things. For its CPU shortcomings, Arena shines with its multi-player gameplay. If you've bought this game for its one-player gameplay, though, don't expect anything new.

Arena Unleashed doesn't really add much to what's already been done. I think it's still a fun multi-player title, though. It just seems like they slapped a new paint job on last year's model and are calling it "brand-new."

While you can get away with this once (or maybe even twice), consumers will eventually catch on.

I could knock Arena Football for its uneven AI, limited options and modes, and the fact that they are rebasing an old engine. But it's still enough fun as a multi-player title that hard-core fans won't care. If you haven't gotten enough Blitz and/or are a fan of Arena Football, then go ahead and get this game. There really isn't enough to offer up a new experience for anyone else.

COMPATIBILITY



GENRE: CAR
 DEVELOPERS: INFOGRAMES
 PUBLISHER: INFOGRAMES
 EDITION: UK
 # OF CD'S: 1
 AVAILABILITY: NOW

REVIEWED BY:
 ALEX ANDREWS

Sports

TEST DRIVE LE MANS

The Test Drive series is now well documented in the annals of PlayStation history. Each reiteration has been a little better and a little bigger than the last. Since the acquisition of Accolade by Infogrames, the Test Drive series has gone under a major expansion and now includes a LeMans game and an upcoming Test Drive Cycles game, with many more under development. Some may argue whether we need 20 different Test Drive games, but my point is that they continue to be solid titles regardless of the nature of the "drive." The latest game, Test Drive LeMons, started out as a PC racing game from Infogrames, but with the acquisition of Accolade, the title underwent a Test Drive repackaging and was headed for the PlayStation.

The first thing you notice about LeMans is that it is huge! It's based on the 24 hour race of LeMons and, if you pick that option, you can actually race for 24 hours. Now, as cool as that sounds, I'm not sure most of us have that kind of time or patience. The more realistic option is the "Championship" mode. Under this option, you race GT 2 cars in a full season. If you finish first in the points after all of the ten races (ten to 15 laps each), you move onto the next level. There are a number of different teams, all fielding GT cars. During the course of your season, you'll receive e-mails from the other teams inviting you to join them in the next season. Of course, these other teams all have cars that are better than yours, so you'll obviously want to join them. My biggest complaint about this system is that you have to finish the whole season before you can switch teams, and at ten, ten to 15 lap races it can get pretty tedious.

When comparing TD LeMons to some of the other racers currently available on the PlayStation, you'll find that it stacks up pretty well. The graphics are good but not great. They are more in line with 2nd to 3rd generation games than with state of the art titles such as GT2 and Colin McRae Rally. The car models are a little rough around the edges, and little details like visible tires and skid marks seem to have had little time spent on them. The tracks are all very detailed; You'll have no problem making out upcoming turns and warning signs.

Where the game really shines, however, is in its speed. This game is just plain fast! I haven't played anything this fast in a long time. On top of that, it also plays well in all three camera angles. The 1st-person perspective is so fast, it will absolutely make you dizzy.

The AI is also very fair. Even starting out in last place, you'll have more than enough opportunity to catch up and win. The control is the best I have ever seen in a PlayStation racing game and, believe me, that's saying something. Regardless of how fast you're going or how steep the upcoming curve is, you can keep control of your car. Even in varying weather conditions, you can easily compensate for the fluctuating road conditions.

When you add it all up, you definitely have a "Gold" game. Three modes of play, blindingly fast action, above average graphics, a multi-player mode and incredible depth give you a racing experience you'll enjoy for quite some time. My only real complaint has to do with the aforementioned requirement of completing a season before you can switch teams. Additionally, the Save option is hidden and if you don't do some serious digging, you'll think you can't save - and at an average session in excess of three hours, this can be quite frustrating.

BOTTOM LINE

While not in the same league as GT2 and RRA, Test Drive LeMons is still a worthy purchase. This is the first racing game I've played in a long time that I haven't wanted to put down. It did get a little long in the tooth after extended periods at the wheel and I can't possibly imagine sitting through the entire 24 hour LeMons mode, but the overall package is top notch.

COMPATIBILITY



90%

PlayStation® COLLECTIBLES?

Before the advent of the internet, people searching for unusual collectables were out of luck. Stamp and coin collectors had their magazines and newspapers, and it was easy to find books on Pez dispensers, GI Joe, Barbie, tin lunch boxes, baseball cards, and Hot Wheels. If you collected something out of the ordinary, however, you were limited to searching flea markets and placing ads in the newspaper.

Thanks to the miracle of modern technology (and our friends at eBay), you can auction off that Space: 1999 Commander Koenig doll with the bell bottoms or locate that 1966 map of Disneyland you've always wanted. As someone who grew up with videogames in the 1970's and 80's, I have spent a fair amount of time scouring thrift stores and swap meets looking for games and peripherals for long-dead systems. Thanks to the internet, I have been able to obtain many sought-after titles. The bad news is that nearly everything collectible — even videogames — garners a heavy price. If you are only casually interested in that first edition copy of "Pride and Prejudice," for example, you won't likely be able to outbid a fanatic with the screen name "lizbonnet@aol.com."

I am certain that the PlayStation will also become collectible some day. Scoff if you must, but this isn't too far-fetched. Children and teenagers eventually grow up and develop both feelings of nostalgia and a disposable income. The PSX is the first system that some young kids have ever played, and therefore when they are older they might start looking for a few PlayStation systems and titles for "old times' sake." For all you budding capitalists out there now realizing that there is money to be made, how can you figure out what items will be the most sought after?

Using current developments as a guide, I'm providing you with my predictions on what may turn out to be collectors' items of the future. Clip this article out, start buying up the items now, and get ready to sell them for four times the amount you paid... provided you can keep them in good condition for the next 10-15 years!

SYSTEMS

Most classic systems are not very collectible in and of themselves. Only those systems which were prototypes or released in very small quantities are sought after. The rest are sold to be used for spare parts — especially for the power cords. Unlike the very earliest consoles, most systems have unique power supplies that cannot be mixed and matched. Just try and find an AC adapter for an Atari 5200 or 7800 at Radio Shack, for example.

Some people also purchase spare systems to be used as back-ups for that day when their Odyssey2 becomes a shiny silver doorstop.



As for the PlayStation, it has been redesigned several times in its life span. The oldest unit, with the parallel port and audio/video outputs, might be the most sought-after. But, then again, due to problems with overheating, it is unlikely that many of these units will still work in the future. My guess is that the first batch of Dual Shock systems, with the built-in kaleidoscope program and parallel port for Game Shark usage, will be the most common. The blue "debugging stations" provided to developers and media will perhaps be more valuable, but these, too, are subject to the stopping problems and few who own them will be likely to part with one. A nice collectible system might be the Net Yaroze PlayStation — the high price and limited demand for them make such systems rare even today.



GAMES

There are three main types of valuable classic videogames: rare games, prototypes, and special editions. When it comes to rare games, there is an inverse relationship between the popularity of the game and its value. It makes sense, actually. Since Asteroids and Space Invaders were such big hits, it follows that Atari made a lot of those cartridges. With such a large supply, the value is extremely low. On the other hand, a game such as Chase the Chuckwagon — which was a giveaway from Purina dog food and never sold at retail — is in short supply and thus can fetch (pun intended) more money. Games which were never released at all but exist as prototypes — such as Save Mary, The A-Team, or Tempest — are also highly-prized collectibles. Finally, some games were altered after being released — names were changed, hidden initials were removed, or glitches were fixed. The pre-altered games may also be collectible, since generally they are in shorter supply.

How does this apply to the PlayStation? Well, you can expect that your Gran Turismo and your Tomb Raider won't be as valuable as your Motor Toon Grand Prix and your Deathtrap Dungeon. It has nothing to do with how good the games are, just whether or not they are common or rare. It's hard to name specific titles at this point, but you can be sure that the most valuable games will be the ones which sold the least number of copies — meaning the crappiest titles. ironic, isn't it?

The PlayStation had its share of games which were never released for some reason or another. The unknown variable here is the ease of copying such games, since they are on CD's rather than ROM cartridge boards. Thrill Kill, for example, was an ultra-violent fighting game that EA decided to drop, but there are enough copies out there floating around that it is relatively easy to obtain one. Games such as



Rattlesnake Red and Global Domination, on the other hand, aren't so accessible. The problem is that, thanks to the fact that many people own computers with CD-ROM drives, copies can be made easily and cheaply. I therefore don't expect PlayStation prototypes to ever command the same prices that cartridge prototypes do.

And yes, the PlayStation also has its share of altered games. Remember the fiasco with EA's Tiger Woods containing a hidden South Park video (playable only on a PC)? The video was removed from later releases — void! instant collectible! Some "Greatest Hits" versions of games — notably Jet Moto 2, Soviet Strike, and Lost World, add features, functions, and levels not found in the regular releases of those games. Not long ago, a brouhaha erupted over the use of a "bandito" character in Toy Story 2. Activision announced it would remove the offending character from further versions of the game. Once again, a collectible is born! Even as I write this, I have seen two different covers of Star Wars: Jedi Power Battles: a solid black background (Toys R Us) and a comic illustration (everywhere else). The game is the same in both cases — terrible — but now we have a potential collectible.

In the last years of the Atari 2600's lifespan, the console was popular in Europe. There were many games released there which never found their way to the states. Problem is, as the games were designed for use with PAL televisions, even if you managed to obtain one, you would have problems using it with an NTSC television. As the Sega Saturn died out in America, Japan was the only place you could still find new games for it. Thus, these foreign titles became hard-to-find collectibles.

The availability of mod-chips and import game dealers means that U.S. gamers probably won't have a hard time locating PlayStation games released only in Europe or Japan. Still, they may yet become collectible as conversation pieces.

Finally, don't forget the draw of game packaging! Sony games have been released in several different types of packaging — long cardboard boxes, long clear plastic boxes, black plastic molded boxes, and CD jewel boxes. Even the jewel boxes have variations — some games which came in a double-sized case were later released in a single-sized case. The odds are good that someone will be looking for a particular variation.

PERIPHERALS

Peripherals are valuable in the world of classic gaming, primarily because they are no longer on the market. If you break your Atari 5200 joystick in 1999, you can't obtain a replacement from Best Buy can you? Some peripherals are also valuable because they never caught on with the public, such as the Amiga Joystick or the Mattel Power Glove. Many were quite expensive when brand new, but as the systems phased out, enterprising collectors purchased lots of boxed joysticks and paddle controllers waiting for the chance to sell them again.

Sony's use of a similar Dual Shock Analog controller with the PlayStation 2 may change the collectible market somewhat. If your original PlayStation controller breaks in the year 2005, you may still be able to buy a replacement for it at the store. Most likely, it will be the funky-shaped controllers and gizmos from third-parties that will be in demand. Peripherals such as the Sony mouse, the ASCII one-handed RPG controller, the NeoGeo, the specialized Biohazard controller, and the Nyko trackball, which weren't supported by a lot of software, might become collectibles. The non-dual shock analog controller, released for a short period of time, is a similar hard to find peripheral that might command a good price.

MEDIA

What do you do when you finish an issue of PSExtreme? (We know — you encase it in plastic and carefully archive it, right?) Older readers might keep and take good care of magazines, but younger

readers toss them around, cut them up, and eventually trash them. If it weren't for World War II paper drives and mothers throwing them out for example, old comic books would be a dime a dozen. My dad still regrets putting those 1950's Mickey Mantle baseball cards in the spokes of his bicycle. For similar reasons, many classic videogame magazines are in demand. We were kids and didn't know enough to save them at the time! Which are the most collectible?

First issues, last issues, alternate cover issues, and fan-club publications not available to the general public, such as Atari Age, Atarian, Activision, or Image's Numb Thumb Club News.

Some of the magazines today — EGM, GamePro — have been around for quite a few years and are well-established. As long as videogames continue to be a profitable form of entertainment, these magazines will likely continue to exist in some shape or form in the future. Think about holding onto premiere issues (#1, anniversary issues (#50, #100), or last issues just as before. Other issues aren't likely to be as sought after, unless they contain something unusual — such as Dishard Gamefan's slur-filled, Japanese-bashing College Football review in 1996 (long story — don't ask).

Although Sony does not have a fan-club print publication, it does have the PlayStation Underground. These CO's are available via subscription only, not to the general public, and therefore may be more collectible in the future. Again, one uncertainty is the ease of copying CO's, thus increasing the supply and reducing the price.

RELATED MERCHANDISE

When Pac-Man came along, the marketing machine went into full gear. There were lunchboxes, records, card games, board games, a Saturday morning cartoon, phones, dolls, T-shirts, key chains, bed sheets, and more. Oito with characters such as Q*Bert, Ms. Pac-Man, Donkey Kong, and Mario. As the industry grew, companies also started to publicize their games to the press and the public at large with cardboard cut-outs, posters, and all sorts of gimmicks.

Some popular games aren't character-based (Gran Turismo, and Madden for example), but there are still many icons from the PlayStation generation of videogames — Lara Croft, Crash Bandicoot, Solid Snake, Croc, Gex, Spyro, and so forth. Not all of them have spawned action figures or other non-game merchandise, but many have.

Many action figures from Metal Gear Solid might sell for years from now? Of course, you would have to keep yourself the fun of playing with the toy yourself, so you might have to buy two of everything. And, if you've ever been to E3, you know that gimmicky items are quite plentiful. I'm looking at a foam beverage cooler that says "In Odd We Trust," a miniature football helmet with the GameDay 2000 logo on it, and a CTR key chain even as I write this. They aren't leaving my office any time soon, but someday they just might be the object of someone else's search.

A quick search on eBay will show you that there is a large collector's market for pre-Nintendo videogame systems, cartridges, magazines, and related merchandise. The mere existence of an annual Classic Gaming Expo (www.cge.com) should leave no doubt that there are people out there interested in this stuff — myself included! We are already starting to see growing demand for original Nintendo items and, as the next generation ages, it is only a matter of time before the PlayStation takes its place in an antique store near you.



electronic GAMES



MARK

The EXCAVATE section is where we dig up ratings from past issues and present them on one easy-to-read page, along with a little explanation/breakdown of our rating system. Use this as your buying guide throughout the year and as a reference for those older games that you might have missed (or wish you had).

| PLATINUM GAMES | | ISSUE | SCORE | Broken Sword 2 | February 2000 | 84% |
|------------------------------------|---------------|-------|-------------------------------------|-----------------|---------------|-------|
| Medieval II | May 2000 | 99% | Mission Impossible | January 2000 | 84% | |
| Ace Combat 3 Electrosphere | March 2000 | 98% | BattleTanks Global Assault | April 2000 | 83% | |
| Front Mission 3 | May 2000 | 98% | Deception 3: Dark Delusion | April 2000 | 83% | |
| Golf Paradise (PS2 Import) | June 2000 | 98% | Die Hard Trilogy 2 | March 2000 | 83% | |
| Gran Turismo 2 | February 2000 | 98% | ECW: Hardcore Revolution | March 2000 | 83% | |
| Tekken Tag Tournament (PS2 import) | June 2000 | 98% | Micro Maniacs | May 2000 | 83% | |
| Tomb 2 | February 2000 | 98% | Missile Command | February 2000 | 83% | |
| Vagrant Story | June 2000 | 98% | Mr. Driller | June 2000 | 83% | |
| GOLD GAMES | | ISSUE | SCORE | Twisted Metal 4 | January 2000 | 83% |
| Syphon Filter 2 | April 2000 | 97% | X-Files | January 2000 | 83% | |
| WWF Smackdown | April 2000 | 97% | Armored Core Master of Arena | April 2000 | 82% | |
| Galaxy Wars Red Sun | April 2000 | 96% | Family Game Pack | May 2000 | 82% | |
| Hot Shots! Golf 2 | March 2000 | 96% | NCAA March Madness 2000 | April 2000 | 82% | |
| MTV Music Generator | February 2000 | 96% | Ready 2 Rumble | January 2000 | 82% | |
| Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation | January 2000 | 96% | Romance of the Three Kingdoms 6 | March 2000 | 82% | |
| DrumMania (PS2 Import) | June 2000 | 95% | Wu Tang: Shaolin Style | January 2000 | 82% | |
| MLB 2001 | June 2000 | 94% | NCAA Final Four 2000 | January 2000 | 81% | |
| Street Skier 2 | May 2000 | 94% | Stepping Selection (PS2 Import) | June 2000 | 81% | |
| Toy Story 2 | January 2000 | 93% | Big Or' Boss | February 2000 | 80% | |
| 40 Winks | January 2000 | 93% | Dokyu Billiards 2 (PS2 Import) | June 2000 | 80% | |
| Jap's Venture | April 2000 | 93% | Eagle One: Hammer Attack | May 2000 | 80% | |
| Marvel Vs Capcom | April 2000 | 93% | Fatal Fury Wild Ambition | March 2000 | 80% | |
| NBA Shootout 2000 | March 2000 | 93% | Sammy Sosa High Heat Baseball 2001 | May 2000 | 80% | |
| Rallage Stage 2 | April 2000 | 93% | Silhouette Mirage | February 2000 | 80% | |
| Street Fighter EX2 Plus | June 2000 | 93% | Urban Chaos | June 2000 | 80% | |
| Strider 1 & 2 | June 2000 | 93% | V-Rally 2 | January 2000 | 80% | |
| Disney World Quest: Magical Racing | May 2000 | 92% | BRONZE GAMES | | ISSUE | SCORE |
| Sm Theme Park World | May 2000 | 92% | Boombats | January 2000 | 79% | |
| Cool Boarders 4 | January 2000 | 92% | Crusaders of Night and Magic | April 2000 | 79% | |
| NFS: Porsche Unleashed | June 2000 | 92% | Glover | January 2000 | 79% | |
| Q*Bert | February 2000 | 92% | Nobil 1 Rally Championship | April 2000 | 79% | |
| Alundra 2 | May 2000 | 90% | Vandal Hearts II | February 2000 | 79% | |
| Railroad Tycoon II | March 2000 | 90% | South Park Rally | February 2000 | 78% | |
| Silent Bomber | March 2000 | 90% | Eagle One: Hammer Attack | February 2000 | 77% | |
| Speed Punks | May 2000 | 90% | Army Men World War | June 2000 | 76% | |
| Vigilante 6: Second Offense | January 2000 | 90% | Countdown Vampires | June 2000 | 76% | |
| Worms Armageddon | January 2000 | 90% | LQ Remix* (PS2 Import) | June 2000 | 76% | |
| SILVER GAMES | | ISSUE | SCORE | Superbike 2000 | May 2000 | 76% |
| Dead or Alive 2 (PS2 Import) | June 2000 | 89% | NBA Showtime: NBA on NBC | January 2000 | 75% | |
| Fear Effect | March 2000 | 89% | Smurfs | January 2000 | 75% | |
| Road Rash Jail Break | March 2000 | 89% | War Path: Jurassic Park | January 2000 | 75% | |
| Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2000 | February 2000 | 89% | Jackie Chan Stuntmaster | March 2000 | 74% | |
| Colin McRae Rally | March 2000 | 86% | Rainbow 6 | February 2000 | 74% | |
| Nascar Rumble | April 2000 | 86% | Triple Play 2001 | May 2000 | 73% | |
| Rock the Rink | May 2000 | 86% | Army Men: Sarge's Heroes | May 2000 | 72% | |
| Striker Pro 2000 | June 2000 | 86% | Fighting Force 2 | February 2000 | 70% | |
| GaleForce | May 2000 | 87% | Jedi Power Battles | June 2000 | 70% | |
| Misadventures of Tron Bonne | May 2000 | 87% | TIN GAMES | | ISSUE | SCORE |
| Chocobo's Dungeon 2 | January 2000 | 86% | Supercross 2000 | January 2000 | 69% | |
| Gauntlet Legends | May 2000 | 86% | In the Zone 2000 | January 2000 | 61% | |
| Gekido | February 2000 | 86% | Driving Emotion Type-S (PS2 import) | June 2000 | 60% | |
| Saga Frontier 2 | January 2000 | 86% | Tomorrow Never Dies | January 2000 | 54% | |
| Hydro Thunder | April 2000 | 85% | Sammy Sosa Softball Slam | June 2000 | 51% | |
| Thrasher: Skate and Destroy | January 2000 | 85% | | | | |

what do all these numbers mean?



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INTERACTIVE

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David Jon Winding
Publisher

Another E3 has come and gone and I'm another year older... that's the bad news (well, considering the alternative, I guess it's STILL good news). The GREAT news is that the North American launch of PS2 is going to be far bigger, from a software perspective, than we anticipated.

For those of you yet to hear, SCEA announced that the PS2 would be available in the US on October 26, at a price of \$299 (we got the price right, but were a few weeks off on the launch date). You can refer to our post-show coverage for the titles that are scheduled to ship this year, but I wanted to talk a little bit about the overall market landscape that we are going to find ourselves in this holiday season. SCEA also announced that they would be shipping 2 million units of PS2 to NA retailers by the end of the year, and they are expecting another great year for PlayStation I hardware sales, assuming they can actually get the line time to manufacture them.

While the core's attention has drifted to the new machine (mine included, I can assure you), the hard facts are that PS1 is going to be responsible for the lion's share of SCEA's income in 2000 (interesting note: SCEA has a shot at selling more than \$1 billion worth of hardware in the US this year). Of course, this is also the case for Nintendo, where they expect their big titles (Perfect Dark, Banjo-Tooie, Conker's Bad Fur Day, the latest Pokemon titles, etc.) to produce another great revenue year for Nintendo in the states. So, even though our immediate future is PS2, the industry as a whole will look more toward PS1, Dreamcast and N64 for the bulk of their revenue in 2000.

Nintendo seems to be taking the position that the (very real) possibility that they will come out on top in 2000, as the best-selling video game publishing house, is testimony to the success of a business philosophy that has them waiting until the end of next year to deliver new hardware to compete with PS2. Why innovate now, when there is still so much money to be made via the old warhorse?

Well, Sony's answer is to both innovate AND continue to deliver solid content for the PlayStation. What does Nintendo think will happen when they arrive at the party, riding their Dolphin, next year? Third party publishers have abandoned the N64 in droves this year and most of them are not anxious to get going on the Dolphin. We all know that Nintendo will continue to find an audience for their new hardware, as long as they have Mario and Zelda... but they won't be making any money off of their third party "partners". It's commonly accepted in this industry that, in year six of the PlayStation's life cycle, most remaining N64 players also own PlayStation, and that they only buy an N64 title when Nintendo itself has delivered their latest blockbuster — a fact that is mirrored in Japan.

This does not instill confidence in third party publishers. They want the platform that they sell their wares on to have the largest installed base... period. Nintendo can cite research that indicates that there will still be 25 million potential customers for their hardware after Sony completes year one for PS2, but they underestimate the quality of the machine and the loyalty of the new Sony consumer — the same consumer that probably already owns a Sony CD player, TV and VCR, or DVD. The word of mouth among the core in the US is going to be so strong that Nintendo will end up facing the same uphill battle that they did when they delivered the N64 late to the party. Sure, they'll sell Dolphins to all of the Zelda and Mario lovers, but these are the same customers that will have already been playing PS2's for over a year and, this time, they won't have any "Dream Team" with which to BS the consumer. (Anybody remember that Game Tek (now BK and defunct) was one of those DT members?)

Don't get me wrong, I want to play the next Mario and Zelda as much as the next guy but, after what I was witness to at the show, we are all playing in Sony's world and what a world it will be!

Dave
dwinding@quake.net

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17th POSITION.

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